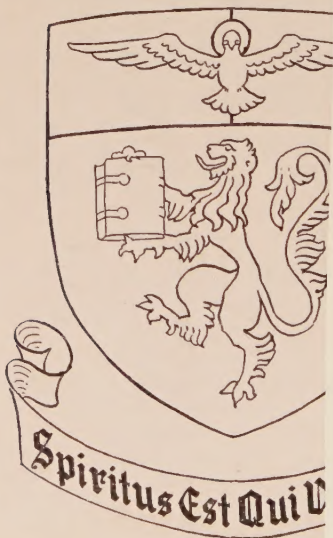


OVERS OF
LOUISIANA

GEORGE W. CABLE

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LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

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LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

(TO-DAY)

BY
GEORGE W. CABLE



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1918

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LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

I

THEIR TWO HOMES

UNTIL within a few years of the date here following, more Creoles lived elegantly in Esplanade Street (now Avenue) than on any other equal length of thoroughfare in New Orleans.

In 1914, lengthened far out to Bayou Saint John, with its two separate roadways and a grassy tree-planted parkway between them, it still was socially best among the score of streets, once so short, of the old Franco-Spanish city.

One of its most attractive dwellings, of brick under a rich brown stucco, was near Rampart Street. It may be gone now. It was of three stories, the first sixteen feet high, the second twelve. That was for coolness. A dozen yards back from the sidewalk, in courtly dignity, without a blemish of architectural parade, this fair home awaited its visitors' approach through a gate of wrought-iron openwork in a wall eight feet high, also of brown stucco and covered, the year round, with climbing roses. Along the wall's coping ran an iron balustrade patterned to match the gate.

Wide balconies shaded the house's entire front, half

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veiled by further light ironwork sustaining them, and by honeysuckles and jasmines that mounted to the third-story cornices and overhung them in odorous masses. At the rear much narrower balconies ran the full length of the servants' wing. 'These, close-latticed, showed how numerous had once been the household slaves, and how well they had been cared for. Yet in the Civil War most of these had strayed away, giddied by the new wine of emancipation.

Here lived the Durels, a Creole family, though numbering but three, but with cousins, of course, of one name or another, all over the city. To be a Creole yet not somehow related to the Durels called for explanation.

Miles away up-town, on Prytania Street, about evenly distant from Jackson and Toledano, stood a house almost a counterpart of this one, in which also was a family of but three, the Castletons: the judge, so called, though practising at the bar; his unmarried daughter, beginning to be gray; and Philip, son of her long-departed sister, his father also a Castleton and also departed. "Americans," not Creoles, they were, descendants of the late General Castleton of the Confederate Army. As to that, another such general had been granduncle to Rosalie, youngest and fairest of the Esplanade Avenue Durels.

In and about New Orleans one feels farther away than elsewhere from everywhere else in the world. So Philip had observed on his recent return from years of study at Princeton. Indeed, the fact is as obvious

THEIR TWO HOMES

as the excess of water in the landscape, or the moss draping the mighty trees. But times, no less than places, the judge had answered him, may make for remoteness. Imagine what that of New Orleans had been when the mistress of the Esplanade Avenue home, Rosalie's still beautiful grand'mère Durel, was yet a Ducatel and in her early teens, living around in Ram-part Street, in the war years '61-'65.

Imagine, we can hear her exclaim in French to Rosalie, or the judge in more sedate English to Philip, imagine the city's remoteness with its people's lives, fortunes, and passions swallowed up in a half-continental cyclone of strife; with the flower of her manhood on the far edge of that storm, and the city herself in the hands of the foe. Those were the days of isolation! Days that modified the merest lad's or schoolgirl's point of view—nay, character—for the rest of life. The very moon and stars seemed nearer than any part of the human world outside the captors' lines.

But now all that was past. Deeper implanted than that there remained another remoteness, in the people's manners, customs, temperament; an inner sort which in perceptible degree maintained the habit of mind, the atmosphere, of war's isolation half a century after the war's end. It was evident in such persistent outward symptoms as those latticed balconies, those high garden walls, those iron gates, some of them locked day and night, and the visitors' bell-knob on the gate-post, a sort of outer sentry to the new electric button at the door. At the same time probably no other city in

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America had so sparkingly busy a social life. The point is this: though these two families were of equal social eminence and though between them there was no apparent antipathy, there was, up to the early months of 1914, a strange absence of intercourse.

True, the strangeness lay merely in the fact's persistence. The two homes were of different languages, religions, literatures, moral standards, social codes. In the days of Madame Durel's girlhood—Judge Castleton's youth—their two social worlds had dumbly stared at each other across Canal Street like well-enough behaved but unacquainted children, and these worlds had not yet fully blended. Yet this unhostile, unconfessed, complete non-intercourse of two beautiful and highly honored homes in particular, lasting on into the fourteenth year of a new century and in a new, vastly grown, automobile-outrun, electrically lighted New Orleans, was not to be accounted for in generalities.

II

THEY MEET

IN May of that year both those homes stood closed. Both families were away, "up north," the Durels for the first time in their experience.

Judge Castleton was in Washington City for a client. His daughter was with him. Philip was again at Princeton, momentarily, preparing to give at "Tulane," New Orleans, a course of lectures on American political history. Not yet twenty-six, he was trying, he said, to look thirty and to acquire a head which later might serve for a professor, a poet, a journalist, politician, diplomat, or all in one. Mr. Durel, president of the Carondelet Bank, had gone to New York in behalf of that important concern, and of course his ladies were with him.

Society felt the loss of all six. Grave, capable, refined Miss Castleton, regretted socially, was even more regretted in her church, whose missionary energies, for instance, went limp for want of her; while the Durel ladies, missed in church, were missed even more in society. Drawing-rooms felt the absence of madame's exquisite touch on the piano, accompanying the highly trained voice of Rosalie, who, at twenty-one the despair of all suitors, sang so well that social enthusiasm de-

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clared nothing stood between her and a "career," could she but stoop.

However, the Durels had left New York, where monsieur's errand had succeeded. This was the more a triumph in view of the very private fact that for long his bank had found it hard to declare full dividends; so hard that he had stuck too closely to his desk and was now "merely tired." But when one is so "merely tired" that he cannot close his eyes without seeing faces, he should pause, and now he and his ladies, homeward bound, were pausing at Vanity Fair, or, as some call it, Atlantic City.

A day or two later Philip, his Princeton work done, rejoined his aunt and the judge in Philadelphia, and the three decided to squander half a week on Atlantic City's boardwalk. They arrived not far from the Durels' hotel one evening when there happened to be assembling there a convention of librarians. It was to be a pleasant meeting of both sexes, and the Castletons had hardly taken a light refreshment before Philip had made acquaintance with some of the delegates and persuaded the judge and his aunt to accept their invitation to the affair.

In a chill breeze and the roar of a heavy surf and under a blaze of electric lights that blotted out the heavens, they traversed the boardwalk not quite alone. With them went a Mr. Murray, a fellow hotel-guest; a lone Scot, of fifty or so, in morning dress—Norfolk jacket, no top-coat. He carried a thick stick by the middle and stooped forward in a limber stride. Like

THEY MEET

M. Durel, he was a banker, but, quite unlike the Creole, was of a sort whose notes of travel boxed the world's compass with an inquisitiveness hardly less than meddling. We will not attempt to render his oddities of speech fully or precisely, but—

“I’ve chawnced,” he said, “to hear two or three domestics call those librarians ‘liberians.’ Would that be an accepted Amerriicanism?”

The “liberians” were found standing about in sociable knots, waiting to be called to business. Philip and Murray promptly mingled with them. The aunt and her father, on the other hand, found a pleasant alcove of four seats, all empty.

They were a noticeable pair. The judge was of a good height and trim figure which evening dress set off uncommonly well. His face was clean-shaven, yet his bearing was rather military than judicial. His features were refined, yet strong. Repose, benevolence, and intrepidity were equally evident in them. His hair was hardly as gray as his daughter’s, and he was, beyond doubt, far older than he looked or Philip could not have been his grandson, despite the remarkable resemblance between the two.

Miss Castleton was slender and handsome, and her dress excellent in all points barring perhaps one: a touch, no more, of severity, without which one might easily have failed to observe in her lips, on her brow, a like shadow of the same quality within. One of the undetected things this stood for was an overstress of femininity; that phase of femininity which often, not

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always, keeps the possessor single—at times may even keep others so.

Hardly were the two seated when by a fine effort a diffidently hovering male librarian came close:

“Pardon, but are you not Judge Carrington, of——”

“Almost, sir. My name is Castleton.”

“Castleton! Yes! I knew you by your likeness to your picture in yesterday’s *Ledger*. I wonder, Judge Castleton, if you know in New Orleans a man named—oh, there, I’ve forgotten! What *is* that man’s name? Why, he’s a distant connection of mine; his mother’s stepfather was a second cousin to my wife’s brother-in-law. I never met him but once and that was in that second-hand bookstore in Chartres Street near the cathedral, kept by that black man—blackest man I ever saw—named—oh—pshaw!”

“Shaw, you think? Isn’t it Landry?”

“Landry! Right! Ovide Landry. You know him, then?”

“No, but I used often to pass his shop when the courts were down that way.”

“Well, he’s the most extraordinary black man I——”

Music silenced him. Piano, violins, and trombone crashed their evening finale—early because of the convention. At the same moment appeared the Durels. They came from the dining-room, late, and loitered toward the alcove as to an accustomed corner. The music ceased, but under cover of its last peal the librarian had vanished and was gone for good, forever. As the judge resumed his seat he noticed the Durels

THEY MEET

coming and turned to his daughter to propose that they move. But always Miss Castleton's primal instinct was to reject any masculine suggestion, and by the time she was aware of the Durels it was too late to go; madame and her son took the two available seats.

They had not seen the Castletons. Their careful eyes were on Rosalie. Three or four paces away she had been stopped by an eager young girl, a librarian, who had secured her acquaintance before dinner and now was overburdened by two male charmers, Philip being one and the Scotchman the one too many. What emphasized the attention of Rosalie's kindred was that Rosalie and Philip, from first sight, first exchange of words, were showing an interest in each other which enlisted the sympathy of every casual observer.

Philip and she were both from New Orleans! Stated in that strange place, what resonance, what weight, what color, what thrill, were in that fact! And although she was of the farthest edge of the "Vieux Carré," while he was of the "Nouveau Quartier" and had been back at home so few months after those years north, how near, nevertheless, had they been to meeting, already and at home, a dozen times!

The Scot and the pretty librarian forgot to look at each other, so "easy to look at"—as Princetonians say—and so easy to listen to were the other pair. Especially Rosalie. Philip, except for a neat mustache and a shade more of breadth and stature, was his grandfather reminted, and seemed to the two admirers particularly worthy to be, thus transiently if no more,

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freely singled out by the Creole girl. And she! They could almost forget her unusual beauty, so enchanting were her voice, her manner. With these for a setting her speech, though English, was a jewel, her faint Creole accent the jewel's best gleam.

In Britain the Scot, in New England the library girl, had once or twice known women whose words fell from such limpid springs of feeling, and with such tranquillity of countenance and frame, that for moments one could close his eyes and yet get the speaker's whole wealth of meaning and charm. But here was something as different as a diamond from a pearl. A play of sympathetic intelligence in her tone, in her eyes, on her brows, was like just enough stir in the roses. Her speech neither began nor ended on the lips, nor her radiance in her face; every part of her presence, in a delicate equilibrium, had its perfect share in every utterance. The slight, unconscious undulations of her hands ran daintily through all her being, chasing the waves of her thought and shedding that light of life which is the painter's last touch. So felt the British banker, with that vivacity of sentiment never lacking in the true Caledonian; and so felt the book-sated little librarian, unselfishly enraptured to find poetry, for once, not pressed and dried in books but fragrant, alive, incarnate.

The chief joy of Philip and Rosalie was in chancing on an inspiring fellowship through which to contemplate the great world in aspects so vividly unlike those of their remote home city. Each to each supplied a

THEY MEET

lively want. The judge, grand'mère, aunt, père, had always been richly sympathetic yet not without discrepancies of view inseparable from discrepancy of years. Cherished, worshipped, they were nevertheless "back numbers," gilt-edged bound volumes. Philip seemed to her, she to him, news! news of the hour, on the hour, for the hour!

The librarians came to order, the library girl vanished forever—so wags the world at Vanity Fair—and Rosalie, with Philip on one side and Murray on the other, rejoined her father and madame. These had her yet in their eye, although madame had broken the ice between themselves and the Castletons. In voices kept well under those of the convention the newcomers were introduced and the seven, held together by the Scot, withdrew to an unoccupied reading-room. Leaving madame to the judge, and Rosalie to Philip and Miss Castleton, the Briton fastened upon the Creole banker.

III

AT VANITY FAIR

MR. MURRAY touched monsieur's buttonhole: "I've a letter to you, unless there are other Durels in the banking business."

The Creole was of a trim figure, in clothes precisely correct, and his tiny iron-gray waxed mustaches, each ending in a single hair, agreeably tempered his invincible dignity. "Beside' me," he said, "they have, in my bank alone, my two nephew', receiving and paying teller', and my second cousin, cashier."

"Then you are A. Durel, president."

"Yes, Alphonse. Zéphire Durel is my cashier."

"Gad! from A to Z, as they say in this country. I know the phrase on the other side, but I'm sure 'tis an Amerrikanism."

Monsieur lightly showed his dropped palms and shrugged. The nailing of Americanisms was not his business.

The Scot returned to the point: "Man! I shouldn't want three relatives o' mine in my bank."

The Creole smiled solemnly: "To those relative', as to me, the responsibblity of the Durel name weighs more than ten banks."

Philip, seemingly half forgotten between Rosalie and his aunt, caught monsieur's remark and turned. At home he knew Zéphire by sight; a handsome fellow of

AT VANITY FAIR

thirty-five, living showily in bachelor's quarters in the old decayed and forsaken rue Orleans. Jolly to meet, he was said to be; deadly to offend, possessed of a famous gift for accounts, one of those geniuses who add five columns of figures at a single glance. He ran a costly motor-car, sailed a fast pleasure-boat, led a fast life, and was as bigoted in his vices as some of us in our virtues, yet of an unquestioned business integrity; the city's smartest example of how all those things may be successfully combined. Philip turned to the two bankers, therefore, with a new interest in Durels.

But Murray, making haste to be less personal, asked Philip why so many New Orleans banks, the Durel bank included, held their charters from the State rather than from the national government. But Philip deferred to monsieur, who explained that in New Orleans there was much "trust business," which national banks might not do, and while the Scot listened Philip glanced back again to the other two couples, yet preferred to leave them to themselves, particularly the judge and madame—"mère."

"Mère" and "chère" were all Rosalie ever called her, as "the judge" was Philip's only word for his be-latedly young grandfather. The picture furnished by the elder couple made it preferable to Philip to remain himself a while alone. The judge seemed so exactly adapted to madame, and she to enjoy a content so sweetly dignified, that to draw nearer would be too much like breaking a spell.

And, besides, Philip could no more keep his eyes on

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Rosalie than off. But on madame they could dwell and in her grace he saw Rosalie's abated to a past tense; biography prophesied. In madame there yet remained that shell-pink, shell-white, rose-warm translucency of complexion with which the Louisiana Creole so often surprises such first beholders as, say, the Scot. On her was repeated under the faultless throat, faultlessly matching the attire, Rosalie's single-stranded necklace of small pearls, except that madame's pearls were, so to say, punctuated with amethysts, as life is with experiences. Her rich coils of hair were blacker than Rosalie's and did not cast the frequent glimmer of bronze which the girl's did in a supple play of head, neck, and shoulders; but the matron's shoulders, ampler than the girl's, were as perfect for her years as Rosalie's for her youth. In the two faces there was almost the same softness of oval contour, the same mobility in the faintly arched nose, the same voluptuous sweep of lashes. Only in eloquence of glance did the younger peculiarly excel. The eyes of both were large, but Rosalie's were the richer in changing lustres; now straightforward and alight with candor, now musingly dropped sidewise, but quickly lifted again into self-illumination, as though her speech could hardly be speech without them.

At one point she paused with a bright glance toward the assembled librarians. They were applauding their chairman. Philip came to her side, but his first word was a facetious one to his aunt:

"What is Miss Durel saying that so pleases them?"

IV

WHERE THEY CONVERSE

THE girl broke in gayly: "If I had been saying anything to them it would be of the Boardwalk! Continually since morning we've been on it, 'mère and I, bundled up in one of those wheel-chairs. I didn't think there was in the whole world a place so multitudinous!"

Miss Castleton took her literally: "Oh! is it more so than Fifth Avenue—or Piccadilly?"

And Philip more passively added: "Even our own Canal Street, in Carnival time——"

"Ah, Canal Street! One week in the year, and then only from Magasiné to Rampart—five squares! While here—twenty! And here 'tis not alone the multitude but the types! So many and so droll!"

"And from every corner of the earth."

"Yes! Yes! And yet still, among all those types the most droll——" She archly checked up.

"Are Americans?" inquired Philip.

"Americans!" she echoed, and turned to the aunt.

But with amiable reluctance that lady confessed to little care for types, or love of crowds.

Rosalie arched a lovely distress: "Ah, crowds! they're not for me! Last Sunday seventy thousand people!"

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

To love seventy thousand—strangers—at one time—and mostly types—it is not possible! Yet still I think 'twould be twice as easy as solitude."

"Mademoiselle, you're not confined to that choice."

She gave the briefest of glances, looked down and drew a breath. "On a pinch," Philip added, "you might choose society."

"Ah!"—she looked heavenward—"that's what I love—society!" Brow and lashes drooped again: "Solitude is terrible."

The aunt wanted to be generous, but such worldliness silenced her. Yet her smile was kind. The girl turned to the nephew: "You neither? Don't care for types?"

"I care a lot. To me they're the best reading."

She sparkled. "They are history alive! We saw to-day—eating sea-water taffy—two unabridged histories of Vermont—male and female!"

"Any complete history of the United States?"

"Too many to count!" One subtle gesture, delightfully refined as it ran through her whole form, so truly and comically implied a fat, masculine, swaggering alertness, that the aunt smiled again even while protesting: "Oh, that's not the whole country; it's not the South!"

"And it's only one type," said Philip.

"But 'tis *everywhere*, is it not? Fifth Avenue, Broadway, Boardwalk? After those I'm content to return home; I have seen the North!"

Philip laughed and sat down by her.

WHERE THEY CONVERSE

"Ah," she exclaimed, "you think not?"

"I—I'd like to talk with you about the North," he said, "as a fellow Southerner." His aunt began to offer parting courtesies. But as she moved to madame and the judge, Philip insisted to Rosalie: "I take that subject in dead earnest."

"Yes? I—I don't like anything dead. I prefer to take everything in live joke."

"That's all right. One of us in joke, one in earnest, that's the way to the truth of things. But, really, don't you think we Southerners ought to study other sections of our country and our people—if only to know the South and ourselves better?"

"Yes! Yes! That's what I tell—" A side glance indicated her father.

"In joke?" asked Philip, but their seniors came near and he added: "Very well, we'll discuss it to-morrow, if you don't forbid."

"Possibly, yes, if we happen to stumble across."

"Trust the stumbling to me," he said, but she turned to receive the Scot's parting bow.

Out under the stars, where a growing warmth of air presaged a pleasant morrow, Philip, beside his aunt and followed by the two older men, remarked that either the surf's thunder or the star-quenching splendor of electric advertising was enough to fill one's whole mind, but that the two together emptied it. To which the aunt, guessing his mind's true fulness, replied with a query in undertone:

"How did those two ladies strike you?"

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

"Delightfully," he replied, and glanced back. "Judge, think what that grandmother must have been at her granddaughter's age."

The judge, discoursing on Panama or something as remote, forgot his point, though both he and the Scot ignored the remark. Not so the quiet aunt.

"How about the girl?" she asked Philip.

"She? Why, auntie, the law oughtn't to allow a girl to be as handsome as that one."

The response was tardy and meditative: "The law, unfortunately, can't prevent her."

"Why, auntie dear! Why, auntie!"

"Philip, such beauty *is* unfortunate. I've never known a case that wasn't a pitfall to the girl and a burden to all concerned. Unless there is behind it a mind and soul quite as extraordinary——"

"Ah, but there is. She's got them, all three."

The aunt smiled prettily. "She certainly seemed to have a mind to you, Phil."

"Oh, please! That's just her way with every one."

"With every one man, I warrant you."

"Auntie, don't women always stand up for their sex?"

"Not for individuals of it! And not for types. That girl's a type herself if ever there was one."

"No, she's a type *by* herself if ever there was one."

The amused lady caressed her nephew's arm: "That's what the stricken always think," she said.

"Oh, I'm not stricken."

"Then you shouldn't have looked it."

WHERE THEY CONVERSE

"Oh, my dear! even in joke don't say that. I'll declare I didn't look stricken."

"To yourself, of course, you didn't. To her you did, so plainly that she had to tell you that she wasn't in earnest. I confess I liked her for that."

"So did I. I do yet."

"Then her every point in saying it is gained."

"Why, auntie, you're like a bird with one chick. What's so suddenly put you so out of character?"

"My boy, I'm my whole true self when I say I hope that girl will never have the luck to see you again."

They were re-entering their hotel, and Philip made no reply. Within, the two stood aside while the Scot left them and the judge went to the office for their keys. Philip gave his aunt an unearned smile.

She touched him fondly. "Phil, in the realities you and she haven't one least thing in common."

Asking himself, "Where *does* this panic spring from?" he replied appeasingly, accepting his key from the judge, "I fancy that in the realities"—he began to back away to the elevator—"Never mind. I'll find out as soon as I can and will let you know."

Her eye released him, but detained the judge. Suddenly, privately, she said: "He mustn't do *any such thing*. This mustn't go a step farther."

Gravely he replied: "It won't. It won't."

"Why won't it?"

"Well, for one thing—did you ever hear of the second cousin, Zéphire?"

V

ON THE BOARDWALK

MORNING found Philip on the sea's front while the waters yet flushed the changes of a spring dawn.

The tide was in. The surf leaped and thundered in three, four, five yeasting lines, at times unbroken from pier to pier. In the quiet air there was hardly more chill than would be gone in an hour. Yet little moving life was in sight; long stretches of the Boardwalk were without a human figure. Over the horizon a few thin clouds stood as motionless as though painted there, while beneath them, miles away in the northeast, crept a tow of coal-barges, and in the southeast another.

The Castletons' hotel was one of the most southerly on the ocean front, and not to miss the earliest glimpse of the sun when it should spring from the sea Philip turned toward the Inlet and took his way along Vanity Fair's densest and smartest show of herself; palatial hotels, theatres, piers, and shops. When that first glimpse came he paused at the Boardwalk's rail and watched it grow, willingly lost in its never-failing wonder. Another man came and stood beside him under the same spell. It was Murray, in Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, still gripping his stick by the middle. Neither saluted until the great ball's lower edge had cleared the ocean's rim.

ON THE BOARDWALK

Then they spoke and soon walked on together. The Scot said he had been away southwesterly on the Boardwalk to a place mostly of empty lots, called on sign-boards Ventnor.

"Would that be, possibly, an American Indian name?"

Philip thought not and said he was saving that walk for the close of day, when he could face the sunset as he went, and later, returning, would see the Boardwalk's myriad lights and the ocean silvering to a rising moon.

The Scot was stirred. "Gad, you've the right instinct. I'll do that this evening!"

Philip, his mind on Rosalie, was sorry not to have kept his instinct to himself. Yet he retained a gay manner.

"There's another instinct I wish I had. Don't you approve an instinct for the crowd; a right way of seeing *it*; a sympathetic and yet sane way?"

"Ay! Now here in America, where the people's maddest instinct is for keeping busy, like, eh, like mere awnts, 'tis a real relief to find, here, such swarms of them, for days together, just idle—stopping a bit—to live."

Maybe for lack of the right instinct this seemed more sympathetic than sane. "Wouldn't you call it mighty shoal-water living?" Philip asked, while his mind roved.

"Ah! if they kept it up, verily! But to-morrow they go back and 'get busy,' as you say here?"

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When, at the next mile-post, the two faced about for breakfast the Scot had got clear round to this: "You Amerricans, you've one ggreat advantage over us, that your country's as compact as it is vawst? You've all your eggs in one bawsket, as you say?"

"You might say, in forty-eight," laughed the Southerner.

"True; you've that many States; yet you're all in one boat?" the Scot insisted.

"Except for the Philipppines—and a few like trifles," rejoined Philip, trying to keep his mind off a certain hotel, the next they were to repass.

"Ah, you couldn't help that Philipppine business, and I'm glad you couldn't," said the Scot. "It's profited the wurruld! Promoted its peace! Lifted it and the brown man on and up! Ye made that war in the fear o' God, so hold fast what he gi'es you. It paid ye in breadth o' mind. 'Twas so I talked to your Creole banker lawst night. 'The first founders of this nation,' says he, 'never set out to own Pacific islands.' 'Nor to buy Louisiana,' says I, 'but are you sorry 'twas bought?' Doctor Castleton, treat your Philipppines as you may, no great people can ever be quite—or only—what they set out to be. Man, look at Brritain?"

"Yes," absently said Philip, looking for Britain at a certain hotel's windows.

"Did Brritain," the self-entertained Scot went on, "start in with the *intent* to sprawl herself all over the globe—till now she looks ready to drop to pieces by dead weight and holds together only by being, always

ON THE BOARDWALK

and everywhere, in one pair way or another, the world's man-of-all-work and as democratic as she is imperial?"

"Yes," said Philip. "No, of course not. Here's where we met the—the librarians—last night." His heart unaccountably broke into song like a caged bird.

"Humph!" responded the Scot, as though he heard the strain, "and right here's her father" [at a jeweller's shop-window]. "Good morning, Mr. Durel."

The grave Creole had barely time to show due cordiality when his daughter came out of the shop. She had been for days, she explained to Philip, in search of a gift for her grandmother, whose birthday this was, but could find nothing good enough which was not hopelessly beyond her purse. The rapture of the difficulty fairly illuminated her. When he smilingly asked if the fault was not madame's—fault of her faultlessness—she lighted up yet more as she said it was, entirely! Then when he said that his aunt gave him the same distress every year the illumination deferentially waned, and when he ventured to add, "We, you and I, have that much in common, anyhow," she said, "Yes?" as if not sure she understood, though she did, better than he dreamed.

"Well, papa?" She had turned and the two bowed good-day.

VI

WITH ONE MURRAY

PHILIP and the Scot strode on, the younger man pondering the happy moment. How brief, how trivial, yet how much it had contained. "Nothing in common!" Were not such chance interchanges their own proof of much in common? The bird within, unable to say flat yes or no, absurdly struck up at the top of its voice: "Rosalie Durel, Durel, Rosalie Durel! Rosalie, Rosalie, Rose, Rose, Rose!"

Would Murray hear it again? To prevent him Philip spoke—volubly. He reverted to Britain; extolled her wonderful ways and means of peace, order, and beneficence; her conservation of so much liberty and law with so little show of force, and the loyalty she inspired in so many millions of all races of men, white, brown, yellow, black, and red. He laid it on thick and the Scot took it like a hero till at "yellow, black, and red" he offered an interruption which Philip—with a visible flush—could not but regard as acutely out of time and unfair.

"Hark! You're a Southerner, but I'd say this to any American, for ye're all tarred with the same stick, as your saying is. You fancy your race question's a peculiarly American question. Man!" But here Philip broke in:

"Down South we're narrower than that, Mr. Mur-

WITH ONE MURRAY

ray, I'm afraid. We call it a strictly Southern question, which we will take care of if the rest of the country will only let us alone."

"But it isn't and ye don't. Doctor Castleton, it's a British question and a world question and it's getting bigger every day."

"Oh, we know how big it is," said Philip, wishing—as if that would help or hinder—that Rosalie were by.

"No, you don't know either how big it is or how small. How small, that is, in the world's sight, among a hundred acuter questions. It looks biggest to you where it's smallest, so—I'll say but this word and no other henceforth—you handle it, all of you—North, South, East, West—California, Carolina—timorously. And whenever the strong are timorous, Doctor Castleton, they're tyrannical. Now here! This one word for a last one." They had reached their own hotel, but the speaker faced round into Philip's path: "Do you know why we Britons get on so well with the dark races? We make them as white—inside—as we can, as fast as we can, yet keep ourselves white, every way, without force or fear. We stagger and stumble, but somehow even when we fall we—we fall up-stairs. Enough—you're—you're bored. You Americans hate your race question, North and South; and no wonder, you handle it so badly." They entered the hotel.

Near the breakfast-room they met the judge, who tendered Murray his daughter's seat at table. She was

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breakfasting in her room. Philip went away, but "would be back."

The judge smiled after him. "Can't eat till he's told his auntie good-morning. When he went off to college she took his pledge never to go to bed without reading his Bible and he's never missed a night."

The Scot sniffed. "Oh, it's little that proves."

"So we both tell her, but to her it proves everything—waiter, bring me coffee, shirred eggs, and milk biscuits."

The Scot, who had kept that same pledge for twenty years, looked up from a reverie. "What did you order? No matter, I'll have the same. I can say a better word than that for your nephew."

"You mean for Phil? He's my grandson."

"True! But you're such chums, you know."

"What is your better word?"

Here Philip returned and took his seat, the Scot eyeing him steadily and responding: "He takes a controversial mauling with the grace of an ambassador."

"Who, I?" Philip laughed. "Why, Mr. Murray, my quick temper's my weakest plank. You're pulling my leg."

The Scot threw up a hand and burrowed for his notebook: "Pulling y'r leg. Gad! I'll jot that down."

While he wrote, Philip told the judge that the aunt hoped to see him before he should go out. The breakfast came, and when the book was put away the Scot tapped one of his biscuits with a fork. "And this, I make no doubt," he said, "is a buckwheat cake?"

WITH ONE MURRAY

Neither hearer smiled. The pair displayed the grace of at least two ambassadors while the judge told what made the thing, in the American dialect, a biscuit, and Philip explained the nature and function of the buck-wheat cake.

Really, they enjoyed their untiring questioner. No aspect of American life escaped his blunt probe, and when every now and then he lit upon some matter specially Southern, his queries were so oddly put that to answer them was entertainment enough.

And the Briton was pleased. "Albeit you're Southerners," he remarked, "you're better democrats—*academically*—than most Americans I have 'struck,' as you say in Chicago. You're born progressionists."

"We'd like to be," said the judge, and Philip added:

"But first and last we'll 'live and die for Dixie.'"

"Oh, Lorrd! Leave that to the mossbacks! But you, it's a mossback *you* are, after all—by training."

"I get my training from the judge," laughed Philip.

"Ah, from fifteen up! But before that from y'r awnt!"

The two Castletons smiled steadily at each other. The three men rose. They bought the morning papers. Then they started, Philip for a window-seat, the Briton for the open air, the judge to find his daughter; but a second impulse turned the Scot back to address the judge softly: "See here. I've a lifetime habit o' stickin' my nose into other people's business. May I do it now?"

"Why, that's very friendly of you, sir. Say it out."

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"'Tis but this: don't—up-stairs—be beguiled, will ye?"

"As to what?"

"To vamoose the rawnch. To bounce the town, this Boardwalk and fools' paradise. Don't snatch the boy from it."

The judge twinkled. "You want to maul him some more?"

"No, no, 'tis no' for that. Major Cas'—Judge, I mean—I've gone as daft on yon lad as you are. And on the lass as well. A bit ago, seein' them together against the rising sun, thinks I: 'In the image o' God crreated he him! Male and female crcreated he them.' Don't parrt them yet. If I can read their title clearr they're chock-a-block wi' destiny. Maybe not; I don't counsel folly; I say be *not* rawsh. You wonder why I 'butt in.' Well—for this: I—was snatched away once, mysel'."

The pair stood silent. Suddenly the judge's hand went out to the Scot's. Then with a tardy smile he stepped to the elevator and disappeared.

"Oh, ho-o!" thought the Scot, and out on the Boardwalk alone he added aloud: "I ought to ha' guessed that too!"

VII

IN THE BLAZE OF DAY

THIS was Vanity Fair in spring, not summer. No bathers swarmed in the surf. Hardly a pleasure-boat was out.

Except when ebb-tide made room on the beach for saddle-horses and pony phaetons all outdoor pastimes were on the Boardwalk. Its benches held but few sitters, but afoot or in wheel-chairs thousands drifted to and fro, and so balmy this midday was the breeze that half the chairs were without hoods.

The one that bore Madame Durel and Rosalie was covered. They liked the covered ones best. Close behind them strolled the two bankers, in conversation. Often these halted at the outer rail, while the two ladies had themselves trundled up to some window display of embroidery, gowns, or millinery, or left the chair and entered a jeweller's shop in quest of the still unfound birthday-gift.

What care-free, innocent time-killing! The shops were like beds of flowers, and the ladies themselves were the butterflies. The salt breath of the Atlantic ruffled their brows, and half round the compass the ocean's majesty rewarded every lifted glance.

Miss Castleton, too, was out, though tardily. There had been letters to write, which provoked her two fond

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kinsmen to call her "Mary and Martha doubled and twisted." For one letter was to their New Orleans domestics and covered pages of directions for having their home ready to receive them at once; the other was to the secretary of the missionary society of which she was president.

Now, however, here she was, in a wheel-chair for one, sincerely happy in the snugness of its impregnable limitations. About it hovered her father and nephew. It was but fair that Philip, especially, should see to it that Vanity Fair should repay her coming. To roam the Boardwalk, he had insisted, was a unique adventure, and she was honestly making the experiment with but one reservation: to keep clear of all entanglements with those only too attractive Durels.

From the hotel she might be wheeled in either of two directions. Southward was sea, sky, and comparative seclusion. Northward, too, were sea and sky, but also the crowd, most of the shops, and very likely the three undesirables. Yet if one had to risk an uncovered encounter, in the crowd was the place to risk it, and she had chosen the crowd. Having gone well through it, to where the Boardwalk narrowed, she had turned back and, once more in the throng, had had her chair faced seaward and halted at the outer rail, with all the tramping, trundling crowd behind her.

The day was resplendent. A sunlight that covered the ocean from edge to edge seemed to permeate her frame. Far and near on rocky shoals the waters foamed snow-white, and over better depths sparkled

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bluer than the bluest heaven. The surf's wide rollers chased one another like lines of revellers, spread glidingly up the sands, and at the Boardwalk's line perished in miracles of lace. When her eye rested on the horizon her soul was stirred with the thought that the first land eastward was Spain and that a mere degree or two to the right lay Africa, its sunny fountains, its golden sands. Miss Castleton's human kindness felt a new glow. Her church had missions over there and in China, India, and the Pacific—all that beautiful world still waiting for man to make it spiritually so much more beautiful! She wanted to rise, stretch wings, and take the ocean's width at a single flight.

Both her companions admitted that scenery sometimes gave them that impulse, but they had always fancied it more physical than spiritual. Philip made further concession:

"Now, this morning I have an illusion which I believe is mainly spiritual; I seem to hear every now and then a bird singing." He turned to the judge: "Have you never had that—illusion?"

"Yes, I've had it," was the reply, and while Philip gazed across the dazzling waters his aunt looked steadily at her father and, unseen, the Durels went by with the Scot. When the Castletons moved on again the other three were a hundred yards ahead. There an Israelite was holding an auction of Oriental rugs, mugs, drugs, jugs—whatever one wanted to bid on—and madame and Rosalie had gone in to a front seat. The two bankers had stopped close beyond at a shooting-

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gallery and were showing with rifles such skill that others were looking on.

As the Castletons drew near, the aunt, still Mary and Martha in one, saw two Syrians holding up a rug, and the Israelite inviting bids. Some one hidden by feminine hats named a price, which he proclaimed compassionately. And really the rug was worth three times the bid. Moreover it was the exact answer to one of Miss Castleton's most pressing home needs, a need she had tried to supply in Philadelphia. She wheeled near, stopped, and raised the bid. The judge and Philip enjoyed the scene a moment, moved on a step and discovered the two bankers at their pastime.

They took a hand. To humor the judge the rifles were exchanged for pistols and with these the Creole promptly excelled the Scot, the judge excelled the Creole, and Philip led them all. Crack! the bell rang. Crack! It rang again, and again, and again. Onlookers tiptoed and craned, the Scot cried "Man!" Durel said, "Cr-r-r!" the judge smiled, Philip laughed, the bell rang on and the bird sang.

As the four turned away monsieur touched Philip: "You are the bez' shot I ever see' excep' only one."

"And who may that be?" put in the Scot.

"I think I know," said Philip.

"You think? . . . Well?"

"Isn't he your cousin, Zéphire Durel?"

"Zéphire, yes—though he's not my firz' cousin."

Philip noticed the disclaimer. The bird stopped singing.

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So much more interesting did the four marksmen become as they were rejoined by their three ladies, that the onlookers moved away reluctantly, convinced that the seven were millionaires. Hardly could there have been just then in all Vanity Fair a more charming tableau of social life. A radiance of adventure in the three women redoubled their beauty and was almost as brightly reflected by the four men. For Miss Castleton had got the rug! Idlers paused at the shop to see it, while the seven, moving on, told and heard how it had been got.

At the height of the bidding—so ran the tale—Rosalie, identifying her opponent, had forthwith, to the open chagrin of the crier, stopped bidding and let the victory and its spoils go to her rival. Miss Castleton gave her version to the judge and monsieur with grateful smiles and in accents of distressed apology, while at madame's side Rosalie told hers to the Scot and Philip in a joy of self-denial and with much mirthful compassion for the auctioneer. Then while monsieur and the judge—with Miss Castleton a listener—walked on debating topics of the day Rosalie and madame, but chiefly Rosalie, solicited by the Scot, told another story to him and Philip—the story of Ovide Landry.

“I h'ard a bit of it this mornn,” said Murray—who in his dialect was as inconsistent as the Durels in theirs—“from one o' those librarians, and just now found y'r father, Miss Durel, to be a part of it himself.”

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The ladies gazed. "How did you find that out?"

"From him. We'd got upon the subject o' y'r Southern States, y'r South or what you may call it——"

"Dixie!" sang Rosalie.

"Ay. And I was remarking, casually, how far behind the worrld you've kept yourselves——"

"By good fortune?" Rosalie archly suggested.

"There!" cried the Scot to Philip. "Could anything show plainer y'r Dixie's pitiful detachment from the worrld's worrk? Man! you've lost all thought o' leading."

"A people," began Philip, beamingly approved by Rosalie, "may seem not to lead when really——"

"Really never mind," said the Scot. "Ye're delayin' the tale. Mr. Durel and I had come down, I say—through all y'r wonderful fifty years' growth in mines, crops, railways, bawnks, schools, libraries, theatres, mills—to what was once the tap-root o' the whole business——"

Philip laughed: "Oh, yes, the darkey."

"Ay, him. The ball and chain on poor Dixie's leg. The tap-root, which, tap-root like, has been absorbed into the tree it produced—swallowed up by it—till now, willy-nilly, darkeys or none, ye're Dixie to stay; a 'Sunny South' sun-baked; a civilization that, after all's said, no new people would ever dream o' copyin'."

The three hearers were incensed. Philip flashed. He and Rosalie began to speak but ceased. The Scot had given them the fellowship of a common resentment. Yet courtesy triumphed and madame, with an air of

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absolute innocence, inquired: "You 'ave no pollytickle miztake' yonder accrozz the h-ocean?"

"Madame, we rrreek wi' mistakes; God help the people who fawncy they don't or that their ache is not the worrld's ache. But"—the fault-finder turned to Rosalie—"your story! Your father bade me ask it of you. He'd begun to tell me how much better y'r Dixie has hawndled her black millions than ever y'r North did, when says I: 'Hold! In this lawnd of overdone individualism how many *indiveedual* darkeys has y'r Dixie lifted up out o' the common mawss to inspire and lead the rest?' And when he hemmed and swallowed and I broke in to tell o' this man Lawndry, bless me! I find Lawndry was once, madame, a bond-slave in your father's family."

Madame smiled a lovely pride. "Yes, 'tis true."

The wheel-chair turned and stopped at the rail overlooking the ocean. Miss Castleton's chair came beside it, and the three Durels, led by Rosalie, told the tale.

VIII

STRIKING CHORDS AND DISCORDS

OVIDE lived at the back of his second-hand bookshop in Chartres Street, New Orleans, about as far above the cathedral, monsieur said, as Zéphire Durel's Orleans Street rooms were behind it.

He was a pure-blooded negro of seventy, born the slave of Mme. Durel's father and from infancy had been allotted to her elder brother as playmate and body-servant. The master had permitted his son, and later his little daughter, to teach the lad as much of their schooling as he cared to learn and when the slave proved the brighter pupil——

"Egad!" murmured the Scot.

"Ah!" said madame, "that sometime' tranzpire', that pic-uliarly—whiles young,," and Rosalie spoke on.

The slave boy was offered his freedom. This meant more in Louisiana than in any other slave State, yet the lad refused his liberty. Later he went with his two masters, father and son, to the war in Virginia, and in less than a year brought them home dead. In New Orleans, in '63, he was a freedman, and in '66, two years before Enfranchisement, he had entered political life as secretary to a State treasurer. Through the whole Reconstruction period he had gained a par-

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ticipant's knowledge of the State's inmost history and throughout that cyclone of corruption had led an upright life, owing his integrity first to his mother and then, only less, to the little maiden now this grand'mère of Rosalie. In the scramble for office his uprightness had unfailingly crowded him out, yet his talents had kept him in the public service. During all that period he had been private secretary to this or that lieutenant-governor, the lieutenant-governorship being uniformly conceded to a negro. Even in later years he had been called, from time to time, into momentary secretarial service because of his expert intimacy with a labyrinthine past. Now he was reduced to shopkeeping, yet of the most congenial sort, the Durels felt sure, that he could have found.

Rosalie waved a hand; the tale was ended. And she was glad. Her love for her half-sick father quickened her to perceive that the Scot, the story, and somehow Philip, too, had got his nerves on edge.

"And since long time," madame commented, "a sizter to the wife of Ovide is one of my housemaid'."

Monsieur smiled faintly to the Scot. "Well?"

"'Tis a tragedy, Mr. Durel, to the seeing eye."

"And teaching us—what?"

"Ah, that's for you and y'r Dixie to say. Such things, anywhere, have to come by the thousand to teach much."

"To those who don't care to learn, eh?"

The Creole was courtesy itself. Only Rosalie and Miss Castleton discerned his irritation.

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The Scot turned to Philip: "What does it teach you?"

Rosalie broke in, all gayety: "That it is going to rain—before a month!"

"And that the sea is wide and deep!" Philip put in.

But M. Durel, not even himself recognizing that for a reason well concealed he was fighting down an impulse to be fond of the youth, repeated Murray's challenge:

"What does it teach, Mr. Cazzleton, thad story?"

"Why, I'm not sure," said Philip. "It lights up a new view to which I've long been coming."

His aunt was suddenly, prettily, anxious, though her words were slow and soft. "Oh, Phil, I don't like new views! The truth isn't new. Truth is eternal!"

"True, auntie!" he said with playful finality.

But M. Durel, with the same courtesy as before, insisted: "Ah, but still, views, we can state them, eh?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Philip began again; but again he stopped. Yet why? The conversation was flowing naturally. He forgot—to Rosalie's exquisite annoyance—that conversation flows not by nature but by art. His eyes were not on her, yet he saw her. Her eyes were not on him, yet he saw in them a warning, to him, to be silent. On the other hand, he perceived also that his aunt saw the warning, and both in Rosalie's defense and in scorn of subtlety he spoke. For what could he say about Ovide or any of his heart-wearying race, to which either she or her father could object? "Well," he said with a gay frown, "if the

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company enjoys views—Ovide, for me, shows this fact which needs to be shown; that whereas——”

“Ah!” cried Rosalie, “resolved that whereas——!”

“Whereas,” repeated Philip, “our old South could give him no worthy, no American freedom, nor the North give him an American freedom over the New South’s head, the New South crowds him half-way down again to his old slavery and——”

“And points wi’ pride,” unluckily put in the Scot.

It was one word too many. The Creole gracefully lifted a hand. “Yes! And yet—even down in Dixie—we don’ point those thing’ to the stranger. And me, I muz’ confess me astonizh’ to find—here—in the North—a Louisianian to say such a thing like that!”

“Dear me, sir!” the Scot began, but Philip checked him. Madame and Miss Castleton sat in blank dismay while between them Rosalie laughingly cried:

“And that’s the last on that subject! Ha, ha, papa, you are not so astonished as hungry! Already ’tis time for lunch, and ’mère’s present is yet unfound!”

Shortly afterward, alone in her closed room, her self-command ebbed low. Standing at her dressing-table, with tremulous hand she lifted from it one dainty appliance after another, of silver or ivory, and then laid it down again, helpless to remind herself what it was for. At a window that looked down upon the thronged Boardwalk and the big surf beyond it she gazed but did not see. She looked across the ocean to its farthest margin, yet saw only with memory’s eye; saw a young man, shapely, strong, mute, flushed,

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facing her father, not letting his own eyes appeal, for an instant, to any others, even to hers. Coming again to the toilet-table she sat down, and in her native tongue said to its mirror, silently:

"What of it? What of it? What matters it to you, Rosalie Durel?" She left her seat and again began to handle things absently, while her pulse throbbed the mute confession: "'Twas never like this before. Never like—" A touch on her door-knob—a gentle call.

"Oui! Go you both down," she answered. "I'm coming."

Yet she tarried. Idly she opened a drawer, idly closed it. She stepped toward the door, but near it stopped to listen. From far away seemed to come a faint, sweet warbling. Could it be real? Was it illusion? She listened more intently, within, without. Then after a deep breath she recovered herself and opened the door. Suddenly the sweet far carol was near—a trivial reality—some woman's captive bird in a room across the corridor. Nevertheless, down at lunch she made no mention of birds. Unlike Philip Castleton, a girl, a Creole girl, knows better. Little birds are not to be trusted. They tell too much.

IX

AND AGAIN, IN FLIGHT

THE sun swung low, grew red and vast in a wide splendor of sea and sky, touched the horizon, sank, filled the world with the light that sets lovers longing, and was gone.

Out that way, with Vanity Fair miles behind him, Philip, afoot on the narrowed Boardwalk, went on and on, alone with his vexation. When at length he faced round, the stars were coming out. The distant city began to glitter. Some fifty yards before him a solitary wheel-chair also had turned townward. Its two occupants, father and daughter, had seen him a good half-hour earlier and without either of them hinting for better speed had hoped to overtake him. Now, retracing their way, their still unbetrayed hope was that they might be overtaken. But Philip, hot yet after the forenoon's incident, kept his distance lest by one chance in a thousand the lone chair might hold just those two whom in fact it held.

So he reached his hotel and they reached theirs. The beautiful night came on. After dinner the judge and his daughter played backgammon while Philip close by tried to work on a lecture, haunted by the knowledge that the irrepressible Scot, at the other hotel, had hunted down or was stalking the Durels.

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At length Murray reappeared, explaining why he had not gone the Ventnor way at sunset, and telling what a rich conversation he had just been having with the three Creoles about social New Orleans and its lamentable Americanization of manners. Unsmilingly he consulted his note-book and recounted with what droll innocence they had misnamed some things; called solecisms "indecorances" and gross manners "corrupt practices." One remark he had stopped under a Boardwalk lamp to record in full, and the gravity with which he read it out gave Philip the best laugh he had had since M. Durel's "astonishment." It was the lament of the elder Durels that "the younger generation of Creole', they follow their incline to persuade their parent' to led them go their own way in the new Ammerican fashion."

But Murray's most stirring communication was made to Philip apart when the judge and the aunt had resumed the dice to complete their final rubber. It was then that he told how, accompanied on the piano by grand'mère, Rosalie, entreated by certain young people who had found out her talent, had sung French and English songs for them, and a Scotch one for him! When he said good night to Miss Castleton she added to her reciprocation a bit of news that drew from him eager but vain protests.

Outside Philip's windows—and his aunt's—and M. Durel's—and Rosalie's—a silver glory poured down on wave and Boardwalk, laid sleep on thousands of eyes, wore through the small hours into dawn and flushed

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into day. Then, while it was yet morning a train porter at Vanity Fair's chief railway-station led the Castletons aboard a Philadelphia train and showed them seats seven, nine, and eleven. But the aunt demurred: "Why, those are not our numbers."

"Yass'm, you-all name' Djurel, ain't you?"

"Our name is Castleton."

"Law', tubby sho'! Here yo'-all's seat; eight, ten, twel'—here come' sebm, nine, elebm now!"

And the Castletons and the Durels, each fleeing homeward from the other, sat down face to face. The train moved. Philip promptly believed the Durel part of the matter was Rosalie's doing, and in a way he was right. Candidly, she had been a bit subtle. Her Boardwalk chase after him in the sunset, and her equally vain loitering for him back again in the twilight, had given her as keen an indignation against him as she fancied he still harbored against her father; and when at the hotel dinner-table she saw "Let us go home by the first train to-morrow" hovering on monsieur's brow, she had hastened to say it herself.

"Yes," she added, "here is no rest for you. Better even the bank. Let us go."

So here they were. The moment she sighted Miss Castleton she knew who on that side was to blame. Yet it suited her mood to blame Philip also, and so she gave each of them the whole burden. Not so monsieur or grand'mère; they put it undividedly where it belonged. For they had an old reason, older than Rosalie, and to her unknown. Naturally, there were good-mornings

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all round, gayety over the encounter, and secret joy on finding, soon, that one group was going the Richmond route, the other the Chattanooga. Their ways would divide in a few hours at Washington.

Good-by also to Vanity Fair. They crossed the Inlet. The sea-marshes, in delicate hues of spring, immersed in morning sunlight and braided with the colors of the sky on pools and streams, well justified the attention which Rosalie besought grand'mère to give them, an attention that afforded the Castletons comfortable opportunities to contemplate, obliquely, two perfect Creole necks under masses of dark hair. But Rosalie must have had a power of vision besides that of the eyes, for when Philip silently showed the judge a cigar, and the two men started for the smoking-compartment, she turned from the landscape to her father and said, wholly with the eye:

"Now is your time. For your own sake, for the Durel name, for the old Creole courtesies, not for his sake and, above all, not for mine."

A minute later the banker, also with a cigar, stepped inside the smoking-room curtain. Philip hurriedly rose, the judge kept his seat, and the Creole spoke:

"Mr. Cazzleton, I diz-ire, for the firz' time in my life, to ap-ologize."

Philip colored. "Oh, Mr. Durel, I had no right to astonish you." He reddened more. "At least I——"

"Yes. . . . You had the right. . . . Me, I had no right to be astonizh' after that manner." The banker offered a hand.

AND AGAIN, IN FLIGHT

Philip caught it. His eyes seemed to have something fine to utter, but his lips failed to deliver it, and the banker waved it away. The judge stood up, smokers' courtesies followed, and monsieur, as he blew his first puff, sat down between the other two. Said the judge for a start:

"This region is what the artists call very paintable."

The Creole puffed again.

"Flat lands," said Philip, "generally are. Mr. Murray wonders why Louisiana doesn't attract the painters."

Contemplating his cigar M. Durel slowly remarked: "Men paint best their own lands. Louisiana is waiting to be paint' by a Louisianian."

"Just what I told him!" said Philip.

"And w'at he said? . . . Ah, come! *That* man he cannot astonizh me. He said w'at?"

"He asked why she should wait two hundred years."

The Creole straightened up. "That was to trap you aggain into politic'!"

Philip's amusement grew. "No; he knows I don't need to be trapped. Mr. Durel, I think we Southerners ought to welcome outside criticism."

"Ah, you think? For w'at?"

"Well, maybe we don't know our own case perfectly yet. If we do, why can't we state it more convincingly?"

"We don't need. To know, tha'z enough."

"Really, is it? Don't we need also to cure it?"

"We are curing it."

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"H'mm! are we? We've got some mighty soft old spots in our political lungs; grandfather clauses—one-party elections—unwritten, unwritable laws—and it doesn't help us a bit to tell every Mr. Murray who notices our cough that all social systems are more or less tuberculous. Let Mr. Murray say that." He turned to his grandfather. "I wish they'd notice us more. I'm tired of our isolation."

"You call the New South isolate'?" asked monsieur.

"Yes, the newest! and I'm tired of the world's consent to it. It looks like despair of us. I want our policy discussed in the world's forum. Don't you, judge?"

The judge smiled; his reply was tardy. "I don't see what this has to do with landscapes," he said.

"Not a thing!" Philip eagerly agreed. "Now I owe Mr. Durel an apology."

"No," said the Creole, "on the contrary." The talk had been longer than here appears and the cigar he tossed from the window was well used up. "Mr. Cazleton, in some rigard' you are like yo' father."

Philip rose briskly. He fancied a hint of something unflattering in the remark. "You knew my father?"

"In a—public way, yes." The banker turned to the judge. "I think the son is, like the father was, a litt' bit doctrinaire, eh?" He smiled back to Philip.

"Yes," said the judge, evidently referring to an earlier personal contact, "enough for some old-fashioned beliefs; rule of the majority, for instance."

"Majority of the whole people," Philip gayly put in.

AND AGAIN, IN FLIGHT

"Ah!" cried monsieur, "me likewise! Only tha'z providing what you call the whole people. . . . I believe I'll return to my ladies." He went.

The two kinsmen resumed their seats. "Well!" laughed Philip, "that's the gracefulest way I was ever dubbed a fool. Were he and my father friends—or what?"

"Hardly either. I'll tell you about that some day."

"Humph! He certainly doesn't take any shine to me."

"I think he only wishes he didn't."

"Why, what for? Can't you tell me that?"

"Not now; we haven't finished about the landscape."

Other smokers came in. When the pair returned to Miss Castleton, Philip was surprised to find M. Durel in his, Philip's, seat, conversing with her; but the surprise was redoubled when monsieur, instead of rising, waved him into a seat between madame and Rosalie.

X

HOMeward

AFTER all, it was not so very inexplicable, Philip's unsought privilege. For his new seat was just opposite his aunt, while madame faced the judge, and Rosalie her father.

At the same time, if monsieur had manœuvred this he had done so as gracefully as he had called Philip that hard name in the smoking-room. The young man's surprise faded. For what could a young man and a maiden talk about thus besieged? Yet he reminded himself that this was merely the old Creole way. He thoroughly liked the absence of all sign of that modernism whose devotees "follow their incline to persuade their parent'——"

Rosalie mentioned the perfect weather. Down in New Orleans it would be far warmer, yet quite as perfect. Loyalty could say no less. Philip, copying the judge, remarked how paintable the landscape was.

"I think all flat lands are so, don't you?"

Oh, she thought so! Assuredly! She had noticed—enjoyed—in him a habit of brightening as his words grew serious and observed it now while he said:

"As for Louisiana, with a—something—I don't know—an almost tragic quality in her woods and skies——"

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She broke in: "Ah, Louisiana! the most paintable in the world! Sister Claude, my drawing-teacher in the convent, *assured* me that."

Convent! Across the aisle Miss Castleton inwardly winced, but to Philip the main point was the vastness of Louisiana's claim. "Well, at any rate," he began.

"Ah, of course, in the world there are so *many* flat lands, and Sister Claude has never been from the city—she probably exaggerated without suspecting."

Both M. Durel and Miss Castleton, seemingly immersed in their own conversation, kept an alert ear for a certain sign in Philip, a measuring of hours as months, of days as years—the lover's note; and in the next breath, quite unconsciously, it came. His voice softened. "That reminds me of the first thing we ever talked about together. You remember, don't you?"

"When was that? I suppose we didn't agree, eh?"

"Why, didn't we? About us Southerners needing to study other regions and peoples to know ourselves better?"

"Ah! to study—anything—is bad enough, but the North—already I am fatigued studying the North!"

"A bird may get fatigued singing. You do, I suppose. But you get rested again."

"Who told you I can sing? Was that Mr. Murray?"

"Yes, he says you're the leading voice in the cathedral choir."

"H'mm. Père Racine allows me that privilege. I am compelled to sing *somewhere*. I would perish, not singing."

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Philip lightened to praise song in contrast to study, but she, mindful of the hearers he had forgotten, said:

"Have you thought again of those—oh—those regions and peoples?"

"Oh, yes," he laughed. "Thanks to Mr. Murray, that thought's grown a tail since then."

"A—" She caught breath and then sparkled: "Wag it!"

"Oh," said Philip, "it's visible only to the ear and quite too political to wag—under the circumstances."

"On the contrary! 'Tis the best circumstance and the best kind to wag!" Then with a gravity so abrupt, genuine, and lustrous that Philip's heart beat consciously, the challenger added: "I like politics. I read them always in the paper. Tell me that one political thought!"

"Why, it's only the other one turned round. I spoke it just now to your father—that we Southerners ought to be glad to be studied, even to be criticised, by outsiders far and near." Smilingly he warmed: "You know——"

But she could not wait. "You should write about that! I am sure you'd be pretty soon able to write as good as some of those reporters."

"I hope so," responded Philip, but his glow had faded and he was again aware of the pair across the aisle. It would have pleased him to tell her—and let her father hear it if he chose!—that two reviews at that moment had his pages in type. But he forbore. His aunt might have told that much for him, but she

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seemed profoundly engrossed as a listener to monsieur, who was speaking of artichokes or something.

"Shall I tell you," Philip asked, "what I think the right man, the right Southerner, ought to do? My father, a lawyer, like the judge, planned to do it. He'd already gathered a lot of material, when——"

"Yes," said Rosalie, both sympathetic and eager.

It is wonderful on what dry hay not Bottom only but Titania herself can feed and thrive without either of them suspecting, or suspecting any one else of suspecting, what is really going on. Under the spell of Rosalie's questionings and marvellings and with a growing enjoyment which largely offset the topic's dryness, Philip unfolded his father's design. It had been to put forth—primarily in the South's own behalf, of course—a small, terse book interesting only to the very earnest.

"Yes!" murmured Rosalie, leaning forward intently.

The book, Philip went on to say, was to have stated in geometrical bareness "The Southern Theorem," a clear, detailed plan of what the South wants to do, socially, politically, in order to fill her place in the world's and America's progress, and a full moral, logical, practical justification of it through illuminating comparisons with the experiments of other peoples in other regions.

"Regions," whispered Rosalie absorbedly.

XI

A BRIEF WAY TOGETHER

"UNDER like or unlike conditions," continued Philip. "But my father had felt this same need—to see, himself, those other experiments and regions——"

Rosalie's compassionate murmur came again: "Regions——"

"And on seeking counsel with other men he found Northerners so uninterested and compliant and Southerners so eager to tell what the South must never, never do or suffer to be done, that he had hardly penned a line when——"

"'Twas too late!" sighed the fair listener and sank back in meditation. "Our Southern Question is the greatest in the world. . . . You don't think so?"

That he would say exactly what he did think she seemed unable to doubt. His quiet way of growing luminous where most men would grow dark—dull—may have meant little to a stranger glancing over the top of his magazine three seats away, or even to M. Durel or Miss Castleton, though at this point their own conversation failed and they openly looked and listened; but to Rosalie, rightly or wrongly, it implied in him a latent, masculine modesty, fearlessness, kindness, and integrity so four-square and so happily balanced that, whatever he talked of, she wanted to hear

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him. Her guarded vivacity betrayed this want to the two listeners as Philip said:

"The setting sun last evening gave me thoughts." At that mention something passed between them too spiritual for any outward sense, yet both kept their balance.

"'Twas glorious!" said the girl. "Papa and I saw it together. I could think of nothing else!"

"And you remember, don't you, how we talked yesterday with Mr. Murray? Well, he made me sore!" They laughed. "And as I saw that sun in all his glory no bigger than a cart-wheel, I thought how right it is that to us humans"—facing monsieur to include him he drew also the attention of madame and the judge—"our own little world should seem bigger than the sun, and that to us Southerners our Dixie should seem the biggest piece of the world."

"And yet," smilingly put in the judge, "there's a right way for it to seem so and a wrong way."

"Indeed, yes!" madame chimed in as though they two had been talking of nothing else all along.

"And that right way is—what?" asked Rosalie. She asked the judge, but the quick reply came from Miss Castleton, with a smile of emotional invincibility:

"That is as Dixie, in her divine right, may decide!"

"Ah, positively!" said Mme. Durel, while Philip and the judge fondly laughed and the two other Durels forbore. With courtly gravity monsieur addressed Philip:

"Tha'z your opinion also? . . . No?"

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The youth gave half his reply to his questioner, the remainder to Rosalie. "No, sir; oh, no. In my notion Dixie's to us rightly the biggest piece of the world because it's that part for which we're answerable to the world. So I say let's court criticism. Let's study others' experiments. For we're answerable to the world by the world's standards unless our own are better; not feel better but are better; better for the world."

The aunt sighed but could still smile—regretfully—to the Durels while saying: "My boy, they are better! We're answerable to ourselves and our Creator!"

"Oh, of course, but through the world that we're a piece of—hold on! Now, gentlemen"—he almost laughed—"I didn't start this."

"'Twas I started it," said Rosalie.

"Anyhow, auntie, let's not say the world, let's say the nation. Dixie isn't a nation or a government. The American Government and nation are answerable for us, Dixie, to the world of nations and governments and we're answerable to America; so answerable that we can't reach over her head or behind her back to answer even to heaven." He faced Rosalie: "Heaven won't take our answer that way."

"Why, Phil, you're almost sacrilegious."

"So were the prophets, auntie." He turned again to the girl: "But I'm neither a prophet nor a pedant."

At that they all contrived to laugh. "You are only—" began Rosalie, but her father, in open irony, prompted:

"A good Southerner!"

A BRIEF WAY TOGETHER

Philip both smiled and reddened. "No, I'm more besides. I'm an American citizen on the American plan."

Under cover of another laugh the four seniors paired off again, and the man with the magazine, seeing Rosalie about to query Philip, spread his ears. "American plan?" she asked. "What means that—when it don't mean hotel?"

"Oh—to one man it's one thing, to another, another. To me it's three. Shall I name them? They're formidable: the Constitution, the Declaration, and the Moral Law. If that makes me a political prig——"

"You can't help that!" she said, dropping her hands despairingly into her lap, and for reply he clapped a palm on an arm of his chair.

Rosalie tipped her head, an action which invariably tipped his heart, and softly chanted, "Do, mi, sol," suiting a keyboard gesture to the notes.

Philip beamed. "That's it, and that's all!"

It gave her courage to venture on. "Those three formidables," she said, "they are your political——"

"Key!" he cried, "chords! I ask no one to tune his politics to mine if he'll only tune to those."

She meditated. She knew his eyes studied her, and when she looked up she did it slowly, giving his look time to grow mild. "That would be beautiful," she said, "if the whole world could *think* in tune, eh?—like singing?"

"Yes," he murmured—and this was the farthest into enchanted ground they strolled on the half-day's journey—"yes, but no two need wait for the rest."

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"You think not?" she parried. "I don't know much about politics."

The words had hardly fallen when he, bending to the window, exclaimed: "Why, if this isn't Philadelphia!"

So ended the first hour, to their two sidelong listeners how tardily, to themselves how much too soon! Beyond Philadelphia, to M. Durel's discomfort, they dropped The Southern Theorem and roamed through a whole garden of lighter topics—opera, superstitions, chocolate-creams, strikes, "Hamlet," dog-shows, aeroplanes, purgatory, whales, votes for women, whelks, and the judicial settlement of international disputes.

Themes were nothing—the one point was to converse. On the butterfly wings of chit-chat, round about each other their spirits fluttered, now close to earth, now in the clouds, measuring and calculating—by what fairy triangulations and spectroscopy!—the stature, breadth, weight, and substance of their two souls.

To Rosalie the experience was tingling adventure. In easy tête-à-tête with the only man she had ever looked on as by any final chance a welcome suitor, she saw in him, through her father's eyes, a "doctrinaire" well on his way to become a political outcast. With a touch of awe she perceived that he was but just painfully discovering himself to be an advocate of the ground principles, at least, of a suppressed political party; a party long held to earth under the odium of its old post-bellum corruptions, its every element hobbled by an open chicanery—of Dixie's own white-handed cham-

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pions—which disfranchised millions of its rank and file, good, bad, literate, illiterate, taxpayers and hand-to-mouth poor, whose right of citizenship, wisely or unwisely, was written in the national constitution.

Outwardly arch, she was inwardly all compassion. Why should he, so fitted to live nobly and happily, fret his lone soul over complacent Dixie's "cough"—his own term—when, as he admitted, every body politic the world around has some grave symptom or bad habit, yet manages to stagger along through political storm and night from one dark makeshift to another as from lamp-post to lamp-post? Why could he not adapt to his—and her—beloved Dixie a great man's jest, that "God takes care of the lame, the lazy, and the United States"?

On the other hand, if the youth must meddle, why should she mind? These were probably the last hours they two would ever spend together. "Hah! politics!" She actually wanted to revert to them; not for long ever again, yet long enough once more for a query or two on plain human rights as he saw them, or might be led to see them if he really was so eager for truth and justice. But when she would have led he held back, and as he did so the car-windows darkened. "What!" he said, "Baltimore already?"

It was. And when it was long past it seemed not far behind as he began, while chatting on in his school-boy way, to glance across the fields for something he would not name, hoping to enjoy her surprise. "We'll be on a long curve," he said, "and—stop! Isn't this

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the very one? . . . No." He set their seats abreast and they watched the sky-line shoulder to shoulder. Now he glanced over his chair-back: "I wish you'd see it, too, auntie—and Mr. Durel."

Now watching again, "Look!" he exclaimed to Rosalie, "away yonder!" and then to the four seniors: "There!"

White as a snow-peak—as an angel—the apparition stood against the noon blue. Rosalie drew a sigh of delight, turned, cried to father and grand'mère, "The Capitol!" and turned again to gaze.

"Zion, I call it," said Philip, and when two strangers looked over two magazines he added: "It has many an inner stain, but so had Zion, hadn't it, auntie?"

"Ah, Phil!"

"Well," he boyishly insisted, gazing at the vision, "to my mind yonder's the holiest hill this side of Zion, and whoever sins against it, inside it or outside it, sins as straight into God's face as a man can."

"Mon Dieu!" wearily murmured the banker, with a glance at madame.

"'Tisn't quite the Divine Providence, is it, Phil?" the judge smilingly asked.

The zealot laughed: "Oh, you! you're speaking for auntie! It's mighty near it. It's the National Providence."

"Well," Rosalie sighed, "the national providence is vanished round the turn."

With brushes and obeisances the porter came, and presently the voyagers had parted, three and three.

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In a well-filled dining-car the two magazine readers sat face to face at lunch. One talked so busily that when a group of three took seats at his back he kept straight on despite his companion's covert gestures of warning.

"Now, I'm not saying a word against New Orleans. The way that city's improved, these last twenty years—in a business way—is miraculous. I only say that for a New Orleans man he's queer. But it makes little odds where he lives or is going to live, he's booked for all the trouble he can take care of. You heard him. 'National providence'—hunh! maybe I sin against his national providence—now and then—when I see money in it, but I can say to my credit that I never yet shot up a drawing-room car exclusively with my mouth. He ought to see that new play, 'A Fool by Choice,' don't you know?"

Later, in the smoking-room: "Oh, of course, if I'd known his back was right against mine *I* wouldn't have talked so much with *my* mouth. But we all do that one time or another, don't you know?"

"That's right," said the quieter man.

XII

AND AT HOME ON DRESS PARADE

"HOME again," said Philip as the Castletons sat down at their own board while the flowers of their own garden, tossing their perfumes before them, climbed in at every window. The words were more comforting than new.

Possibly Philip, like Socrates, was "too great to care to be original." And so may have been Rosalie, who that same day in Esplanade Avenue dropped the same remark.

Said the judge in reply to Philip: "All the way coming into the city, through those great deforested swamps that they are turning into orange-groves——"

"And those miles of new streets filling up with costly new dwellings," the youth interrupted.

"Unenclosed," Miss Castleton smilingly lamented.

"And some of which," suggested Philip, "are convulsions of exotic architecture."

The judge smiled in turn. "Phil, I'll give you a good rule of life: Keep your rhetoric for compliments."

"And don't superfluously sass your own town?"

"That's it. It's too much like——"

"Like a small boy kicking his nurse's shins? I think so myself. Well, you say, 'all the way coming into the city'—what? Both auntie and I noticed you were thinking hard."

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"Did you? I was thinking of the day I came back, paroled, at the close of the war. New Orleans is more than twice the size it was then. She's widened to the lake, she's lengthened up river and down, she's transformed her harbor with docks, elevators, and steam shipping——

"Couldn't have done any of it without a national providence," said Philip saucily.

"Well, the fact remains. She's risen into the air and drained the soil underfoot and grown down into it. We've banished Yellow Jack and made our health rate first-rate—or nearly so; we drink filtered water, we can all speak English, and living below Canal Street no longer means you're Creole, or living above it something else."

"I wish it did," sighed the aunt, pleasantly enough. She seemed to Philip to be on her guard against mention of the Durels, but maybe that was only because he longed for it. Had the Durels, madame, for instance—Mlle. Ducatel, as she once had been—anything to do with that old war-time home-coming of the boy-lieutenant now the gray judge? Philip would have liked to ask, but his aunt spoke on:

"Father, let's all three settle now whether to accept the Smiths' invitation to share a box with them a week from to-night at the French Opera House."

"Opera? This time of year?"

"No, but quite as important; that big charity concert."

The debate was brief. "I know what auntie thinks,

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judge. She thinks we'd like to go whether we have to or not, and have to go whether we'd like to or not."

And so they went. Fear of the Durels haunted the lady, but one couldn't flee one's kind for fear of Durels. The French Opera House, once the New Opera House, throne-room of Creole society in the old Creole days, built in the French manner—boxes all around and from floor to ceiling—and still devoted mainly to French opera, was down in the heart of the old Creole quarter, whence the Creoles, as residents, have so largely disappeared. The night was very warm; but a merely warm night never daunts a New Orleans audience; the house was full. Louisiana's capital—which can quote Kipling but still holds to Byron—Louisiana's social capital, like Belgium's ninety-nine years before, had gathered there banks and borders of human flowers and heaped them from floor to roof—the lily type and the rose type, the latter of every tint of pink, white, and red, in maidenly first bloom, in matronly full bloom, behind a perpetual palpitation of fans that you might have mistaken for an invasion of humming-birds from paradise.

How comfortable it was for the exclusives to mark, without remark, the absence of Tom, Dick, and Harry, and to exchange merry bows across the fluttering distances with such social lights as the Browns, Grays, Whites, Blancs, De Blancs, and Le Blancs! The orchestra seats were as well filled with stockholders as on a midwinter opera night, and central among them, animating all demonstrations, shapely, handsome, still

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youthful, and large enough every way except when he stood up, sat Zéphire Durel.

Save for one darling violinist, whose Italian ardor, from the tip of his bow to the tip of his toe, set the house ablaze, the programme was wholly of song. The city's most petted native vocalists were behind the footlights. Every singer sang true and with fervor—*chaleur*—ah! what is song without *chaleur*? Encores outnumbered the numbers, bouquets arched and fell like Roman candles and were snatched up in rapturous amazement and bewildered gratitude amid renewed thunders of acclaim.

Not a dry eye was in the house—it was so warm! Ladies burst their gloves and displayed the ruin with ecstasy. Rosalie showed hers to 'mère, 'mère hers to Rosalie, where they sat, with monsieur behind them, in a box opposite the Castletons'. They had bowed across cordially before the performance began. To be social was a tradition of the house, and to-night it was social from the start. In the programme's mid-interval men left their seats by flocks to visit about, the stockholders, as usual, leading the movement, M. Durel and Zéphire doing their part, and Philip and the judge—though, as it chanced, without stock—doing theirs. They two and Zéphire entered the Durel box together.

In it with madame and Rosalie were a young matron, her husband and his brother, all Creoles of high finish. The two men eagerly discussed with madame and the judge the merits of the various performers. Their encomiums were limited only by their efforts to

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give them epigrammatic form in two languages. The judge's inability to back their claim that the Creoles of New Orleans were the best patrons, best critics, of music, in America, brought gloom to their brows and a touch of fierceness into their smiles of tolerance, but twice and again madame spoke the perfect word of readjustment at the perfect moment, and mutual deference shone again as double as the poet's swan and shadow.

With Philip and Rosalie it was different. The unbounded praises came from him. From her, the young matron, and Zéphire came more discriminative comments. Their criticisms, however, were unsympathetic, and hers, in particular, were so self-evident that Philip found himself amusingly beyond his depth, as he cheerfully confessed. Whereupon Rosalie diverted the talk to history and pretty soon had Zéphire boasting a natal gift for that sort of intellectual amusement, not as a student, "Ah, non!" and "Hoh, no!" but as a collector of old paintings, rare bindings, choice furniture.

"History," was the girl's comment to Philip, "is your toil and Zéphire's toy," a *mot* which the young matron regarded as capital satire and Zéphire accepted as a well-deserved compliment.

Philip noticed something out of the common in the cashier. One sign of it was the promptness with which Zéphire discerned, and showed he discerned, Philip's and Rosalie's interest in each other. Even a hint of commonness in his bearing was exceptional through

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the delicacy of the hint—shoulders held the faintest bit above an honest level, with elbows hung out the faintest bit too far; the faintest bit of swagger in his somewhat too vibratory neck and waist, the faintest bit of naughtiness in his laugh, yet the whole combination so faintly apparent that probably no relative had ever inferred the elements of character it implied—to him, Philip. To a second cousin Zéphire's most ingratiating trait was his frequent outspokenness. In his boastings of himself he was almost aggressive: as inwardly convinced as a cardinal and as frank as the charge of a Spanish bull.

"Very Latin," thought Philip about the time that his own modesty was giving Zéphire a moral sea-sickness.

What a crowded ten minutes! It was hard not to have as much as one of the ten with this rare maiden alone, but if one intruder had not been in the way some other would have been, and it was well to come up with this one right here where, under the silken veil of casual intercourse, one could realize the hideousness of what might be impending in her fate. Suddenly, on the ninth minute, there came to Philip a fierce inner gladness when Zéphire, impelled by what seemed a definite leading from Rosalie, invited him to call at his Orleans Street rooms the following day.

"But, yes!" insisted the bachelor, "I have there many things to astonish yo' admiration! Come at five—six—at yo' pleasure. Last week I've bought me, at auction, a splendid bookcase—carved—and full of

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books!—Louisianas—an' two-three scrap-books of newspaper clippings. I think some of those clippings are projuce' by yo' father."

"Did you, too, know my father?"

"Ah, I was not of the age for him to know *me*. You'll come to-morrow and have a glass of wine with me?"

"And then," put in Rosalie, "you'll tell Zéphire the price to ask for those Louisianas!" She addressed her kinsman: "Because you, of course, all you want to keep is that carved bookcase, and maybe those scrap-books—to light fires!"

Other callers already pressing in obscured Zéphire's reply and the two Castletons withdrew. As they went Philip told his few minutes' experience.

"To-morrow?" said the judge. "Yes, go. But not Friday."

"What's the matter with Friday? A hanging?"

"Madame Durel wants auntie and us to a cup of tea."

"Friday? Let's see," Philip guiltily said. "Yes, I reckon I can arrange for it."

Neither spoke again till they were at their own box, when Philip asked: "Do you think auntie will go?"

"I, eh—" the judge replied, "I think we'd best be together when we mention it to her."

XIII

"THE FOE!"

WHEN the next day's bank hours were done and M. Durel stepped into his automobile he felt no grateful relaxation. Unseen, his chief perplexity rode home with him, passed with him through gate and door and all the appointments of a refined life.

The air was oppressively warm. He went up-stairs, put on fresh linen, and came down again, but the perplexity clung. When he asked for madame and mademoiselle he was told they were out with a cousin, making calls. Finally, on a side veranda jutting into the garden he sat down with his trouble and squarely faced it.

After all, it was only this: Zéphire, in the bank, had mentioned the concert and the two Castletons' visit to the Durel box. He had barely alluded to them, but the allusion's bareness was what signified. Zéphire saw. Zéphire knew: Zéphire, and hence others, no doubt many. Monsieur was not ready for either Zéphire or others to see or know. He could not be ready until he could make out what to do with the Castletons, and he had not made out, not even as to the aunt.

More than the world beside, Alphonse Durel prized the two queens of his home. Rosalie first, with life all before her, and then, second only on a scale too fine

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for degrees, his mother. Closely next these he cherished the Durel name at large. But to serve best his mother, his daughter, or the name at large did not rigidly demand that he should serve their wishes, as to matters in general or the Castletons in particular. Not at all!

Miss Castleton! For reasons peculiarly his, reasons twenty-odd years old, his keenest impulse was to thwart her wishes whatever they might be, and whether in conflict with those of her nephew and her father or not. For more than twenty years, at every chance reminder of her, two words had answered from the depth of his heart: "Never again!" Never again should that spinster's will override his. He had never foreseen a day when her wish and his might coincide. But now, here was the first rub. Could he thwart her now without thwarting himself? Except only the crowning question of his daughter's future, no part of the whole perplexity harried him more than this. He apologized to himself for it: "I am ill yet. I am no more rested than I was in that restless North, on that Boardwalk, when these Castletons were under my nose."

His mind turned indulgently upon the placid judge, and the change gave him ease. What a droll new juxtaposition had at this absurdly late day come round between that old man, madame, and him! He fancied the old gentleman beset by thoughts of what might have been as to the three, not unlike those which he, Durel, had at times of himself and Philip. Fantastical old fellow! If he could imagine he had, at this late

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day, a case of his own, let him have that much comfort. But Philip's case was another matter, a thing that dinned unendurably in monsieur's brain. For Philip's case was also Rosalie's.

Her father had no yearning to see her married to Zéphire, but only to see her married. To his mind spinsterhood was deformity—an eye knocked out, a twisted spine. Yet to give her to the like of Philip Castleton seemed worse than to see her one-eyed, spine-twisted, and a spinster. He would withhold her not for the differences that commonly kept Creoles and “Americans” apart, nor for any matter of wealth, station, health, or character, nor yet for any lack of belief by him in marrying for love. He believed in it! His own marriage, made heartbrokenly and purely for his clan's sake, yet rewarded with a tranquil life and this priceless Rosalie, was no more proof against his belief than Judge Castleton's against his, or Philip's long-departed mother's against hers. No, no! not he! He advocated marrying for love and would never cross lovers but for sternest cause.

Then what here was the prohibitory trouble—religion? Assuredly not. No, Miss Castleton, never again religion! No, flatly, nothing but politics! Ah, yet not politics as they are regarded elsewhere in the world, but as they are in Dixie, in Louisiana, where the ever-blazing under-issue is honor, decency, morals, safety, and happiness, personal and communal, or their absolute opposites, and where one party has to hold the other down by whatever shift it can, and by the

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neck. It was not thinkable that Rosalie Durel, after love's first illusion, could live happily, live at all, with a man—man, woman, or angel—holding—and *teaching*—such theories of society—for Louisiana, for New Orleans. Zéphire, with all his vanities and peccadilloes, was a better, safer alternative.

But here came the pinch again: Philip, whose aunt poured out on him all the passion that might have been a mother's, was the living monument of a wrong done him, Durel, a triumph over him, which even with Rosalie for his illimitable compensation he would be ashamed ever to be able to forgive. How could he yield Rosalie to him? Yet to hold him and her apart, whose mutual fitness was plain to the most casual eye, would be not merely to let the same hand dash from his own child's lips the same cup of love—of life—it had struck from his; it would be to make himself, Alphonse Durel, the executant, the sheriff, of the spinster aunt's unspoken but manifest decree. Thus he would throw away his one, first, last chance of—the word was none too big—revenge; his long-coveted chance to give that woman her one all-inclusive, irreparable overthrow. Yet again—ah, the tangle!—why let that loss count if the decree were as much and as passionately his as hers? It need not. *He* was not fantastical, nor weak, nor ill, but merely—tired!

His mind, as if it scaled a cliff, stopped to rest. How noisy to-day those passing street-cars! But they gave him an impulse. Five minutes in one of them would take him within a square of Zéphire's rooms.

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Zéphire's babble might prove refreshing, a sort of spiritual soft drink. He rose, took his hat, and left the house.

A car on another and remote line, from up-town, had already dropped a passenger in old Orleans Street, who, tapping at the sidewalk door of a dingy two-story stuccoed brick house, was let into a damp hall by a very fat and slatternly barefoot negro woman. She did not take the card which, if one could read, would have identified him as a Mr. Philip Castleton.

Mr. Zéphire Durel? Yes, he was in, up those stairs. His rooms were just at the landing.

One door had a dainty knocker, which Philip tapped. Inside a feminine laugh came just on the tap, but the door opened and Zéphire cut short his own gay talk to say:

“Mr. Cazzleton, expected and welcome. Ah, yes, enter! We *was* engage' in a little business but 'tis finizhed. . . . Madame Philomèle, if you'll permit me—to present you Pro-fessor Cazzleton, Tulane University!”

The deference in Philip's bow accorded her the benefit of all doubts. He stepped in.

Mme. Philomèle had but one gilded foot on the floor. The other hung from a table, but it did him the honor to drop to its fellow as she bowed. For a woman in her fifties she had kept her weight down well. A capital dressmaker had decked her in a harmony of pinks and greens whose high pitch was clearly the wearer's choice. This fact was shown by her ex-

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cesses in jewelry and by her cheeks and yellow hair touched up to the same key in autumn tints. About her lips and nostrils were signs of rude experiences, and subtler ones of defiance in the eyes.

Said Zéphire to Philip, while bending suavely to Mme. Philomèle: "That's a very seldom that two gentlemen, or even one, meet madame anywhere not in her parlor of consultation. Mr. Cazzleton, tha'z a flattery to *you* an' me, yes! Same time"—addressing both—"we are well met together, all three, because, look! Are we not those three Fates? Past, Present, Future! Historian, man of business, clairvoyante!"

Mme. Philomèle bent with professional dignity to Philip and smiled to Zéphire.

Philip responded: "Mr. Durel has invited me——"

"I know," said the clairvoyante. Comrade-like she gave a parting hand to Zéphire. "Adieu."

The cashier retained her finger-tips, well lifted, and led her to the stair-landing. There, while Philip stayed by the treasures of the newly bought bookcase, she murmured her thanks to Zéphire for some favor granted, let him kiss her fingers, and glided down and out.

Zéphire returned to Philip with a roguish smile, but his visitor, holding books in both hands, spoke first:

"You know Ovide Landry's book-shop, don't you, round here in Chartres Street?"

"Ovide! Born the body-servant of grand'mère Durel. But—have a chair and—" On the table stood a decanter and two filled glasses. The host drew

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them near and the pair sat down. “You’ll have the honor of the glass declined by Madame Philomèle!”

Philip tried to resume. “Your Louisianas—” he began.

But Zéphire, with his confidential smile, the jerk of a thumb over his shoulder, and a slow shake of the head, spoke on: “She, she don’t count—to me—any mo’—since long time—about a year. You know, Mr. Cazzleton, this world is comprise’ of two.”

“At the lowest count,” Philip most willingly agreed.

“Yes,” said Zéphire, “the wild world and the tame. She, Philomèle, she’s of the wild, eh? You—except now and then a little step one side on the sly—you are of the tame. But for Zéphire Durel, man of the present, by necessity he is of both! I tell you that flat-foot’. When a man is not ashamed of neither—he’s about all right, eh?”

Philip laughed, said he wished being all right was that easy, and tried to revert to Ovide.

“Ah,” said Zéphire, “I know them all, those book-shop men. What I don’t know is what to ask for those books! If by an’ by you’ll pass yonder with me——”

“Let’s go at once.”

“No, no. Hold the horse’! Finish, any’ow, yo’ sherry. That’s no American wine, sir. That’s imported by Zéphire himself, from his Spanish relation’ in Andalusia. And, beside’, you have not inspected my furnit-ure, neither my coll-ection of duelling weapons. Hah! and neither those scrap-book’!”

Wine-glasses in hand, they rose. Daintily bitter,

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smooth as an oil, was the wine which Philip sipped and complimented while being led about and taught the points of excellence and rarity in chairs, tables, cabinets, bindings. In one of the scrap-books he was shown a clipping over his father's name. Zéphire glanced across the reader's arm. "Hoh!" he gayly said, "that foolishness! Pass it! Even a gigantic mistake don't constitute a man a *damn'* fool, and I su'pose yo' father, if he was to-day here, he'd be as much ash-amed of it as you."

Philip turned in blazing resentment and stood choking with the realization that he was a guest. But then his eyes returned to the page and, more as if reading than conversing, he said: "I am proud of my father both for writing this and for a life without a stain."

"My dear sir!" cried Zéphire, "I was but joking! Joking, my dear sir! And even though a joke, I take that back. I'm sorry, eh? Yo' pardon, sir!"

"Well"—Philip uncomfortably laughed—"I'm as sorry on my side. Little pot, soon hot—I wish that didn't fit me quite so snug." He rubbed his head and shook it ruefully. The joke still seemed to him more craft than humor, yet he laughed again. "Let's walk round to Landry's."

"Walk? We cannot walk there and carry those books!"

"Leave them. I can tell him every book you've got."

So presently Zéphire, from behind an armoire door, changing his coat, called: "And same time, I am sure

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you—you don't believe some of those things what your father says in *there*."

"What things, for instance?" Philip inquired with lingering heat, while the stair-door, old and dry, noiselessly swung open of itself.

"Well," the answer came, "where yo' father remarks against those Kuklux, those lynching, and so forth. Biccause now, sinze long time, everybody's find out those things was highly patrio-tique and all for the best for the South and for that—that union, eh?"

"Then I'm nobody, Mr. Durel," Philip replied, "I've stopped trying to believe that."

"Ah, but even those Yankees, thousands of them," insisted Zéphire, busy with a fresh collar and tie, "they believe that; even Union veterans."

"Yes, and when I hear a Union veteran say he supposes they'd do the same in our place I'm as thoroughly ashamed of him as of the Kuklux Klan." With his back to the open door Philip was glancing over the shelved books without really seeing one of them and without noting the faint tread of a weary man, who came up the stair and stood on the threshold, courteously facing aside.

Philip turned and beheld the father of Rosalie. Angered anew, he went on to say what the instant before he had decided to hold back: "I believe that all overriding of law by violence is a criminal and infamous attack on public safety, honor, and liberty."

Too late he remembered again that he was a visitor, and once more blushed. The two men saluted.

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"Same time," remarked the bank president, with courtly good nature, "you propose to *con*-tinue living here; thiz city, thiz State, and to go abbout in soci'tie!"

"Why," Philip replied, with a look of drollery to both his hearers as the three came together, "yes! Yes, if I can without lockjaw. Honestly"—to Zéphire—"my mouth isn't as big as your door, but in one way it's like it; it will now and then swing open."

"Ah," said the senior Durel indulgently, "for ventilation!"

"Of those opinions, ha, ha!" added his cashier in delighted explanation, and the two juniors had a merry moment between them, of a sort.

The three went to the book-shop together. Ovide purchased the books, Philip the two or three scrap-books.

"The books? To see them?" Ovide, at his street-door, shook his head. "I 'ave no need. I 'ave make that *coll*-ection, myself, an' posses' it many year'. Likewise those scrap-book'. Yes, me, I make those." To Philip he replied: "If they can be sent here? Certainlie, with those book'. You can ged them from here when you like."

"And then," said Zéphire to Philip, with a gesture of congratulation, to show him how easily he saw through him, "you can see Ovide again and alone!"

"He's a human document," said Philip, foolishly willing to be transparent. Yet he would rather not have left Zéphire alone with Rosalie's father, as he had to do. He and the two Durels went opposite ways.

XIV

"THEY COME! THEY COME!"

THAT is to say, they came, the Castletons that Friday afternoon, to that cup of tea, so called.

Tea there was none, nor yet coffee, but most delicate cakes and ices and that pre-eminent Creole cordial they call "parfait amour." Afternoon tea was a custom practised by the leading hotels—St. Charles, Grunewald. Ladies of the city, in season, daily met and sipped there. But even with ices instead of tea the rite was far from prevalent in New Orleans homes. Men of the business centres, in any case, rarely took part. Ladies'-day luncheons at the Pickwick Club they enjoyed, but they could not lift the "curate's delight" across the private lawn. Yet monsieur was present with mother and daughter in Esplanade Avenue when the Castletons came.

They came, they came. We say it thus for two reasons. First, Miss Castleton had to be dragged to the encounter, and secondly, within a fortnight the call was returned! Monsieur had no zest for the enterprise, yet he found time to accompany madame and mademoiselle, as ballast, they seeming so top-heavily willing to go. Moreover, it was not for such a Creole as he to let a social debt, trans-Canal Street debt, go to protest. Motoring up that way with his ladies, he

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had a dark presentiment that the two male Americans would be present with the other, the neuter, the spinster. And so they were. But also, grateful mitigation, there were three or four other callers, ladies, up-town Creoles. The lively cross-fire of two languages was as melodious to the heart as to the ear of Philip and the judge.

To Philip and Rosalie both meetings afforded much entertainment—flashes of gayety, glimmerings of tenderness. They were more than meetings; in a gentle way they were collisions; clashings of theories, traditions, and characters which were to one another as square and round pegs to round and square holes, yet every clash ended in a victory of sweet manners. At one juncture, transiently, manners themselves became a topic.

This was when Rosalie asked Philip for an account of his call on Zéphire, of which she had heard through her father. Philip, in his very brief report of it, too brief to require any mention of the clairvoyante, declared that Zéphire, whenever conversation turned upon grave matters, was easily his superior in courtesy.

“Ah!” cried the girl, “superior, Zéphire! Yet, still, yes! And superior with me the same. Many times I have found that with Zéphire.”

Philip’s demurrer was vain. “I rather not be the superior of Zéphire that way. You know, Mr. Castleton—you don’t think politeness is sometimes a fault?” She turned to one of her up-town fellows: “I think anyhow in us Creoles it is.”

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"It certainly isn't in us Americans," Philip replied. "We care nine times as much for good nature as for good manners. You Creoles know that."

"Ah!" she broke out merrily, "and we care fifty-nine times as much for good manners as for good nature. Not *all* those Creoles, but—" She waved despairingly.

Philip could not echo the criticism, yet, spoken by a Creole, two Creoles, such Creoles, he could not presume to contest it. He tried to state both facts but did it so ungracefully that the pair grew mirthful and Rosalie declared his "politeness" superior to Zéphire's best. "Because this time awkwardness gives it perfection!"

Dropping personalities, she had a further idea, but could not phrase it till he found her the words, which he furnished as they left the rest of the company on a low veranda overlooking the side lawn and strolled out upon the sod. The idea was that good manners were comparatively easy to those who value feelings more than facts.

He was flattered. "And it's just when I meet that sort," he said, "that my manners break down; when most needed."

"As when discussing history, for example," she suggested, "or politics?"

"Oh, politics, no! My manners don't break down in politics, they blow up! For it's there we meet those who rate passion more sacred than law, as somebody says."

"Same time, that's when *you* are most to be excused.

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Because in history, in politics, you put your whole heart, h'mm?"

"No, there's only where I ought to put it."

They smiled as though nothing had happened, and he hurried to cover the slip: "No, that shouldn't excuse me or any one. I don't count anybody quite fit—I know I'm not—to talk politics till he's got the good manners—as I haven't—to be patient with bad politics as well as with bad manners." He paused and smiled: "Mademoiselle——"

Her quiet step ceased; her gaze rested serenely in his. They stood at the edge of a sward unevenly rimmed by flowering bushes among which she, in summer draperies, fitted with climacteric perfection and made Philip long to say that nowhere else in open daylight is maidenhood so lovely as in a garden. But all the more, he thought to himself, he should be impersonal. Nevertheless, before his childishly blunt remark was half out it seemed to him a personality most flagrant.

"I wonder if you believe in—in votes for women!"

Her unruffled poise enhanced her beauty. "Yes?" she asked. "And I wonder if you do."

"I'll tell you what I do believe," he replied.

She brightened. "Yes? Well?" They walked again.

"Voting or no voting, I believe in the same political freedom between man and woman as between man and man."

"Ah, that's good. I believe that, yes."

"I think politics and political freedom can be set on

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so high a plane by the individual voter, man or woman, that even man and wife can differ politically as widely as man and man and yet be as beautifully mated as they've ever been since marriage began."

The moment the word was uttered the speaker wanted it back. It might be true but it was not fair. No Creole father was needed to tell him that. It was a shot out of ambush, aimed at the maiden, and as it rang back into his own ears he knew that, for all her outward calm, it had sent the same thrill of recognition into her heart as into his and that she saw in it as plainly as he a move to try love's cause—as his grandfather might have said—by John Doe proceedings.

Her abstracted response made him more grateful than ever. "That's very unfortunate," she said, "a man and wife to have different politics."

"Doesn't that depend on the man and wife?" he asked.

She mused on: "It's good that it seldom happens."

"Good manners and good nature having their limits," suggested Philip.

"Yet at same time," she admitted, "I think any man and wife are sure to quarrel about *something* if—if they——"

"Can just consent to quarrel!" he prompted, and the two so enjoyed their unanimity that Philip felt almost absolved. He would go early to her father, he thought, and speak straight to the point, Creole fashion.

Her next word uplifted him yet more. It was not a time of year for much calling, and on the veranda were

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no newcomers to make the first restive. Miss Castleton was trying to catch her father's eye, but it would not be caught. The garden pair took seats on a bench among the myrtles, and Rosalie said:

"Explain me that difficulty of your politics."

The happy youth laughed. "If I tell you," he said, "do you promise not to call me a political prig?"

"Ah, what is that? I don't know."

"A political prig is a doctrinaire, a dunce, a hypocrite, and a coward, all in one, and my chief difficulty—oh, it's nothing great, it's men calling me by that name. In their minds, I mean, and with their eyes—and their good manners." He frowned, but then smiled.

"That's fortunate 'tis not with the tongue," she said.

"No," he answered, "hot tongues are better than cold civility, as somebody says."

"But explain to me what are the principles of your politics," insisted the girl as she rose from the bench. The veranda company were on their feet, and she and Philip loitered toward them while he replied:

"You read the New Testament sometimes, don't you?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, you'll find all my political principles there."

With no reflection of his light manner she stopped short. "Ah-h! and you *say* that? To men? To men like Zéphire? Ah, well, then—! Well, of course, then——!"

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“Then what?” They stood eye to eye. Her tone of sweet reasoning was like a voice from heaven.

“Ah, I think you’ll find it very difficult, even you, to say that and not be—that thing.”

He barely let her finish. “I know it!” he cried, so earnestly that his aunt and the banker, from the veranda, looked across. He forced a new gayety. “You’re right! I know it by experience.” The gayety failed again, and most unpardonably forgetting that they were in his garden, not hers, he continued: “Your word’s a hard one, but I thank you. I bless you.” The pained rebuke that came into her face only fired him with a fiercer desperation and he blundered on: “I love you. I want you—for life. I’ll be your hero, no meaner thing. With you at my side I can do it, I can be it—against all odds, within or without.”

They gazed a moment more, he reddened to the temples, and they loitered on. There was a ray of hope in the slowness of her footsteps, but presently, with eyes dropped, she said: “No . . . No . . . There is too much dividing us.”

“Surely you don’t mean politics?”

“Yes . . . Yes . . . Politics—yet not politics alone.”

“I believe we were made for each other.”

“No . . . No . . . I think we don’t belong.”
They joined the company.

“Quite so,” said Miss Castleton’s physician next morning; “what you need is not treatment, it’s mountains.”

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"Doctor, I've stayed here through three successive summers without so much as a pill."

"That's it. Only Creoles can do that and keep strong."

"I"—she sweetly shook her head—"I can't go. All the mountains of Virginia won't revive me if I leave Philip behind—or the judge either. Phil, will you go? Father, will you?"

XV

AT BILOXI

JUNE, July, August, half of September, the whole long, shimmering, burdensome, bountiful summer dragged by without a further word between any Castleton and any Durel.

The world war had broken out, all Belgium and the north of France were burning. The Castletons had gone, early and far, into the highest Alleghanies. In an ordinary case one might suppose that one's aunt might find reinvigoration there without a double male companionship; but when such an aunt has brought one up in the bonds of rectitude and gratitude one will hardly choose to employ one's supposing powers with an unfilial stubbornness.

Even rectitude and gratitude aside, Philip might have gone tamely, if not willingly. For within a few days after that amazing mistake, for which he could not for a moment, night or day, forgive himself, the Durels, on Rosalie's own prompting, had fled to Biloxi, eastward on the Gulf shore a two and a half hours' railway run, but in the spiritual facts of the case stellar intervals away.

In Biloxi Philip, the historian, could have told us, were born the first Creoles of Louisiana, among them a Ducatel or two and at least as many Durels. It is

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Louisiana's own birthplace. New Orleans is Biloxi's daughter, nearly twenty years her junior. On one of the low bluffs at the edge of her white sand beach stood the Durels' wide-verandaed summer cottage in the shade of live-oaks and evergreen magnolias, over-towered by a few great pines, relics of the original forest. From its front gate a frail board footway on slim piles ran far out into the water to its bathhouse and fishing and boat wharf, combining with them and the pines and wide-spread oaks to give the scene, especially when sunset lights rested on smooth waters, a notably Japanese picturesqueness.

So it might have struck Philip, with his feeling for landscape, had he been less absorbed in thoughts beyond the outward vision, as he walked westward from the town's centre and came round a slight angle where at the tide's edge the slim white lighthouse stood inside the paling fence of its keeper's pretty flower-garden. The Castletons had just got home again, and Philip, with barely a day's pause, had come here "to begin all over," as he had told his dear confidant, the judge, apologetically left behind in the persistent heat of the city. It was the end of the week, and M. Durel had been over here since the previous afternoon, breathing gentle refreshment from the pines and the sea. This was entirely to Philip's liking. He particularly wished to begin his new beginning with monsieur. Hence his note to him, sent a trifle earlier by messenger, asking leave to call.

The reply had found him waiting on the steps of his

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little waterside hotel, his abstracted gaze on the graceful courings of the many pleasure-boats that skimmed the bay and the sound, or came from concealment after the long circuit of Deer Island. He had wondered which sail might be the Durels', which Zéphire's, and whose might be a certain elegant steam-yacht anchored far out, yet not too far for him to see that there were others on her deck besides men, and that she was about to get under way. Now as he passed the light-house he noticed that her anchor was up and that she was moving in a direction that implied Pascagoula and in lesser degree Mobile, Pensacola, Appalachicola, and Floridian harbors in general.

He felt a throb of misgiving, but would not allow a second one. Yonder in the long shadows of its aged grove, wide-skirted with encircling verandas, was the Durel cottage. Out in front of its live-oak bluff and white beach the low sunbeams gilded and crimsoned the shoal waters beneath and beyond the hundred slim legs of its board walk. On a bench under the four-sided incurved roof of its Japanesque fishing-wharf a man sat at ease, looking seaward. It was monsieur himself, awaiting his caller.

His greeting was proof against Philip's alertest criticism; as free from coldness, warmth, or sparkle as a still wine "at the temperature of the room." The two sat down with the steam-yacht in their view, but dwindling in the wide pink and blue expanse between the pines and white sands of Deer and Horn Islands. A few words were said of the weather, the season, none

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of the war that was convulsing half the world, and then, as Philip took breath for the real business, the banker remarked:

"You find me al-lone."

The visitor was pleased. "I hoped I might, for a few minutes," he said. "Mr. Durel, I know that according to Creole custom three calls on a young lady, at short intervals, imply courtship and require one to ask her people's consent before going further. Isn't that so?"

With his eyes out on the water monsieur languidly shook his head: "Nn-o. Used to be, yes. But tha'z in very bad rippair, thad cuztom. Many good cuztom' of those Creole' are biccome Ammerican-ize' egcep' ammong a few ole familie' of the hide-boun'."

"For all that, I'd like to subscribe to it, sir."

Monsieur lifted his shoulders, dropped his hands.

Philip continued: "I'm not aware how much you know of what has passed between——"

"I 'ave not eave'drop'. I have ask' no queztion'."

A smile did not quite sweeten the reply.

"Well," Philip said, "at any rate, counting Atlantic City, this is my third call, and I want you to allow it all a third call can mean and yet say come again."

Monsieur was looking seaward again. "You have the *per*-mission of yo' h-aunt, I su'pose?" Zéphire's wine could not have been more delicately bitter.

"I ask no permission but yours," was the smiling reply. "I'll court a Creole girl in Creole fashion, but as to my own kin I'll follow my free American choice,

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and if I ever win it my dear good auntie will come round to it as gracefully as a sailboat."

"As a catboat," thought monsieur.

"That's part of our American way," Philip added.

The banker slowly turned to him: "That was the manner of the marriage of yo' mother an' father?"

"I think so. I—I've never heard. I've never asked."

The Creole mused. "You never hear'? Never ask?"

"Why, no, sir. I can if there's any reason——"

Monsieur's hand went softly to Philip's knee: "No, there is none." He mused again. Then abruptly: "Well! Any'ow, you, you prop-ose yo' free Ammerican choice."

"With your permission. You know my family, my religion, profession, fortune, my—my politics, my character. If you want any further light I beg you to say so."

As slowly as before the Creole shook his head, pursing his lips. "Nn-o, I billieve—I billieve I don't want. I billieve—an' same time tha'z only *one* objection—I billieve yo' h-aunt she be ab'e to make to yo' free Ammerican choize a very unhappy life."

"No, sir. There is one thing amply sufficient, alone, to make that unsupposable."

"Ah! an' that is——?"

"Your daughter herself; her nature, her character. But another, nearly as ample, is my aunt. However, suppose I get my aunt's approval. Are there other obstacles?"

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"Yes, there are other'."

"What are they? My profession, family, religion?"

Monsieur once more shook his head. "No. I know yo' familie since abbout, eh, twenty-eight year'. I don't know if they thank me to tell you something as old as that."

"Mr. Durel, I have a right to know."

"Ah? What is yo' right?"

"My love for your daughter. It's the greatest thing in my life thus far. If I know myself, my whole future happiness depends on it." Philip had risen to his feet.

His hearer kindly motioned him down. "I will tell you. Yes, tha'z twenty-eight year' aggo I ask yo' mother to make, for me, her free Ammerican choize."

"Why—why, Mr. Durel! And she—was—prevented?"

The banker shrugged. "For one reason al-lone she refuse'. Tha'z biccuse yo' h-aunt she don't want. And yo' h-aunt she don't want biccuse—my ril-igion." The pair gazed at each other. Then he went on: "Of co'ze, you know, you see, I can never be sorrie, biccuse there is Rosalie. And yo' mother"—he made a heavenward gesture—"she can never be sorrie, biccuse—you. An' so, you see, 'tis to yo' h-aunt you owe both egsistanze an' Rosalie."

Philip gravely smiled. "I certainly owe her a double gratitude," he said.

"Me, no," rejoined the unsmiling Creole, "not even a single. My gratitude is egsclusively to God." He

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looked away to that atom in the distance, the steam-yacht.

"Mr. Durel," said the suitor, "even now, risk me, as a son. I can be one, a true one, and not shame you in my reputation or my character."

Monsieur's palms rose breast high. "Iv you was my son you wou'n' have *that* char-ac-ter."

Philip smiled. "I hope it doesn't seem too bad."

"My dear sir, on the con-*trerry*, 'tis too good."

"That's joyful news to me, sir!"

"Mr. Cazzleton, for savety, yo' moral standard' they are too high. They are too far abbove the nature. When a man, a young man, have those moral standard' too high they are in danger to bring misfortune to the married life ad the worzt time; tha'z in the middle."

"Why, Mr. Durel," Philip began to argue, "if a young fellow can pull through his twenties clean I——"

The Creole courteously stopped him. "Young fellow' in their twentie', if they got those standard' too high, they do nod *dream* what are those equinogtial storm' of that middle life. You know Zéphire Durel. Well, look ad Zéphire. He's got his standard', but—not too high. When Zéphire pritty soon reach' thad middle life the girl tha'z marrie' to him she be prittie safe. Biccause already he's"—a graceful wave—"been 'up in the balloon, boys,' and come down aggain. He's suck' the h-orange."

The two looked into each other's faces until Philip felt the jar of his pulse. "I can't lower my moral standards, sir," he said.

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"Assuredly, no."

"And you wouldn't like me any better if I could."

"Assuredly, no."

"Mr. Durel, I can't take you seriously! I reckon you'd risk me if it were not for something else." He slapped the back of the bench. "I don't believe my standards are your real objection—even if you do—any more than I believe they'd be—hers." He smiled away his warmth.

As the pair again sat eye to eye the banker's memory ran back with fresh vividness across those twenty-eight years of which he had spoken. Yet presently he too smiled.

"'Tis a rim-arkable, yes, how you are like yo' mother—excep' one thing. And tha'z another cause for yo' *grati-tude*, that she had not that. Biccause yo' mother, if she had have had the—the——"

"Self-assertion?"

"Yes! Had she have had that, then neither you, neither Rosalie, you wou'n' never have been born."

"If you like self-assertion I ought to suit you."

"Ah! in some thing' I like it; in some, no. In great public queztion', like, eh, *ril-igion*, politic'——"

"When one man thinks one way while thousands think another——"

"Ah! tha'z when I *abhor* that self-assertion."

"In other words, I seem to you a man who'd hang to his political convictions—in their essentials—if men of opposite ideas should outnumber him a thousand to one."

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"Yes, sir."

"And though his so doing should threaten, in his belief, the shipwreck of his whole future happiness."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, sir, on that very ground I sue for your daughter's hand. For that's the sort of lifemate she ought to have if he's otherwise personally fit."

"Ah!" Monsieur lifted a finger. "Person-ally! My dear sir, that way you might be the moze fit in 'the worl' an' still have notion' abbout thiz, that, the other——"

"Which would make me intolerable in society?"

"Yes, and Rosalie, she's verrie, verrie fon' of society." A pause; then: "Any'ow, society or no, some of those doctrine', any woman, of the South, or ad the leaz' any Creole, she might herself, too late, find those doctrine' in practiz', impossib' to live *with*."

"Yes, I dare say Elijah the Tishbite would have been a poor catch for any girl, socially or domestically. But I'm no Elijah. I'm an ordinary modern gentleman, one of whose doctrines is that we Americans, and Creoles, too, have come to a time when there's got to be room for political differences and marital harmony in the same home at the same time. Why, sir, at my board or fireside I'd no more impose my political doctrines offensively upon my wife by deed or word than upon a royal guest."

"But same time, having those doctrine', I billieve you wou'n' have many guest', let al-lone royal."

Philip smiled. "I think better of my city than that,

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far better. Your daughter will always have, on her own terms, all the society she wants. Mr. Durel, ought politics—any more than religion—to outweigh true love and true fitness combined? I love your daughter—consumingly. Not merely for her—her luminous beauty, but for her luminous mind, luminous soul. To me, from our first meeting, we've seemed made for each other by pattern."

"Ah-h!" said the father, who had fought the same impression of them from that same time, "you are not yet even well acquaint'."

"Oh, sir! Oh, sir! some acquaintances take long to make; some are made in a moment. The glove that fits doesn't have to be stretched. 'By these indentures,' as the lawyers say, we—we match!"

Monsieur shrugged. "Tha'z the way they all bil-lieve."

"Yes, and some are mistaken, but some, sir, are right! May I be allowed one inquiry?"

"Ah, I su'pose yes."

"Twenty-eight years ago how was it with——?"

The Creole's hand flashed up: "No! tha'z not fair!"

"No, it is not. All I beg is that you do by me as you asked to be done by then. Will you? Won't you?"

Once more the two men sat eye to eye, and again, as the moments pulsed away, Philip, at each new throb, looked more and more like his mother. It was inevitable that, however long the mutual gaze should last, the gazer least sure of himself would be the first

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to abandon it, and at length monsieur glanced off to where the yacht was barely discernible in the subsiding light.

Whereupon Philip said: "I'll take all the time for acquaintance you want me to, sir; only let me begin here; this evening; now."

Monsieur slowly shook his head. "'Tis impossible."

The misgiving which the suitor had put away as he came along the beach returned. "Do you mean physically impossible?" he asked.

"Physic-ally, yes, sir. Rosalie she's yonder, with madame an' some frien'"—a wave of the hand indicated the yacht—"a three-week' cruise."

XVI

ON THE DUREL BOAT-WHARF

THE suitor rose up, gazing after the distant boat. Monsieur rose and Philip turned. "Mr. Durel, one more question—may I? You probably know, if only through madame. Did your daughter think—think I was—coming?"

"My dear sir, I have to tell you—yes, she thought."

"And it was her choice—to go?"

In tone the reply was kind. "To go? Yes, sir, 'twas her free Ammerican choice."

Philip looked again toward the vanishing craft and then back to monsieur: "Was it American enough for you to say to me, come again?"

"Mr. Cazzleton— My faith, sir, I do not know! Wait. Wait till she's ritturn." The speaker drew a meditative sigh. "No, I cann' tell that—till she's come back."

Reluctantly Philip moved to go. "Good evening, sir."

"Good evening, Mr. Cazzleton."

Where the beach made its slight bend under the lighthouse—now lighted—Philip looked back to the cottage where in such overconfidence he had hoped to find a welcome and Rosalie. A glow of lamplight from a side window even thus early shone red in the darken-

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ing grove, but the slim, stilted footway and fishing-wharf were outlined directly against the sunset's last watery sheen, and there, on the seat on which he had found and left the home's master, he could see him still.

He turned and resumed his way. Reaching his hotel, he passed on by. Later, returning, he passed again. And so for hours, in a night as balmy as midsummer and with the lighthouse for his hither limit, he roamed the bluffs, the beach. From time to time he rested on some bench or the instep of one or another giant oak. At such moments disappointment particularly harried him, but it too had its limits, to which he held it, and neither resting nor going would he confess himself disabled from sleeping should he choose to sleep. Seemingly he merely, mildly scorned that choice. To commune with frequent cigars, beneath the serene heavens and above an unruffled sea was better than dreams or oblivion.

And there was another communion, or a sympathy akin to communion. It was with the father of Rosalie. He was neither at hand nor in sight, but if Philip saw signs aright he certainly was awake. For each time the lover, in his fitful course, returned to the foot of the lighthouse, where the night had early reduced all things landward or seaward to phantom outlines, his sight rested on that abiding glow at one curtained window over in the darkness of the Durel grove.

"Half-past two in the morning," thought the gazer, "and he's there yet. Reading, most likely, war stuff,

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or trying to read. Poor man! It's you who *can't* sleep, and I who steal enlightenment from your light and hope from your distress. Does she love me, after all? That light wouldn't be burning if you knew she did not. She may not herself know. But if she knew she did not, why should she have fled? She knows she loves her father with the same passion with which he loves her. Why may it not be that his devotion has moved him to force our American way on her, and that her devotion to him has prompted her to force on him, by this flight, the old Creole way?

Lover's logic. But it so revived the lover's hope that the thought of indoor rest, even at the risk of sleep, became bearable, acceptable. Yet first he would take one more idle turn, out the narrow board footway to the small wharf whence Rosalie had made her embarkation, and where he had sat with the father whom new hope made it so easy to compassionate. When he had nearly reached the spot he was suddenly aware that the bench was occupied and before he could start away the sitter had risen and spoken:

"Eh, bien? Well, sir?"

"A thousand pardons, Mr. Durel. I didn't dream you were still here."

"Tha'z no matter, sir. Come, sit down aggain."

They sat down, remarking on the beauty of the hour. "We see a thousand whole days to one whole night," Philip added, "yet rarely see any one whole night by choice."

The Creole made no reply. "We bless sleep," Philip

ON THE DUREL BOAT-WHARF

ventured on, "but we'd now and then bless a sleepless night if we'd spend it under the stars."

Again monsieur was silent, till Philip stirred to rise; but then he detained him, saying: "Yonder, in France, many hun' red thousan' are every night awake enough."

Whereupon, not so much for the oppressive interest of the battle of the Marne as for each other's respite from the immeasurably smaller matter which more intolerably oppressed them, they talked of Europe's cataclysm. Talked on for more than two hours and came by and by to a point then much in the public mind; the exalted seat believed to be awaiting America in the world's council at the war's end. On that theme Philip warmed.

"But think," he said, "how we and all mankind would be helped on and up if Uncle Sam could sit in that council, even by comparison, outwardly clean and inwardly pure! Mr. Durel, it shames our makeshift politics!"

Monsieur said all effective politics were inevitable compromises between what ought to be and what is.

"No," said Philip, "not all. I can't believe our Southern doctrine of salvation—that the only political effectiveness is official power at all cost and that victory at the polls, fair or foul, is the only victory worth while. 'Tisn't true, sir. History belies it. Sometimes defeat is victory and victory is defeat. Until we think so we can never take a front seat in the world's councils, and, oh, what business have we in a back seat?"

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So after all, through the lover's plain fault, they were still harping on the daughter. For the father, even more clearly than he, saw that this argufying was, in essence, but a page from a lover's brief. Once more he sat mute and this time Philip stood up. "Sunday morning!" he remarked, for off over the waters where the yacht had vanished the sky was flushing. Monsieur rose. They grasped hands. "Good day, sir," Philip lightly said.

"Good day," was the response, and then to Philip's amazement: "Come aggain."

"Come—you don't mean—when——?"

"Yes, I mean that. I cann' say thad be any use, but—if you want——"

XVII

RAISING THE DUST

SHORTLY after bank hours two or three days subsequent to Philip's Sunday in Biloxi the judge and he entered Ovide's book-shop, bringing with them whom but Murray.

The Scot had arrived in the city barely twenty-four hours earlier and the three came now from one of the Canal Street clubs, where, on the two Castletons' invitation, he had met at lunch M. Durel and two or three others equally qualified to say the best for the interests and policies of their town and State. There his curiosity had proved as untiring as ever, and with every one except M. Durel fired to reply to queries that haled their whole social scheme into the world's court, the hour or two had not been without some spicy breezes. At the first sign of dispersal the intrepid Briton had asked M. Durel how soon, and how, he might see Landry. The Creole had very courteously and plausibly excused himself, the Castletons had offered their guidance, and on the way Philip had told of Ovide's part in the sale of Zéphire's Louisianas, and of later talks enjoyed with the bookseller.

This had so entertained the Scot that on the shop's threshold with the judge he had faced Philip, still on the sidewalk, and bade him not break off. The story

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just then was of the gentle dignity with which the black man had professed gratitude for an "inner liberty" which his race's loss of much outward freedom could not destroy; a condition, he had said, far better than the outward liberty without the inner.

As Ovide was being further quoted to the effect that in Europe, for a thousand years, unnumbered Jews, by this inner liberty, had got more out of life than the majority of their oppressors, the judge had bowed slightly to a passer-by, and Philip, turning, had recognized the strong, well-tailored back and short legs of Zéphire. The Creole had both heard his words and guessed from whom they were so approvingly borrowed.

The three callers found themselves not Ovide's only visitors. In advance of them were two pretty ladies whom the Castletons were surprised to hear addressing the black man as "Mr. Landry," until they were found to be the wife and daughter of the president of a Northern missionary college for negroes. They were seeking a book for him which Ovide could not supply, but which the judge ventured to say he had at home, and would be pleased to lend through the ladies and "Mr. Landry."

This kindness being accepted with a brightness which both Castletons interpreted as social hunger, the Scot thrust in one of his appalling queries: Had "Mr. Lawn-dry" ever, in his stormy days, known any political leader as black as himself, yet, by the admission of his opponents, wise, gifted, and upright?

"Yes, sir," was the prompt reply, given with a touch

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of that verbal pomp which so besets the aspiring negro, "I can designate at least two from whom no well-informed man can withhold that characterization."

"Lieutenant-governors?" suggested the smiling judge.

"Yes, sir, and men of the square deal every time."

Philip ventured two historic names: "Dunn? Antoine?"

"The same, sir," said Ovide, and presently the Scot had the whole group involved in a discussion of race relations near and far, from New Orleans to Mandalay, wherein the ladies spoke so engagingly and the Castletons so liberally that in the end an agreement was made that Philip, on the next Sabbath afternoon, in the main hall of the negro college, should address a "literary society" of which Ovide was the presiding head.

Of this also Zéphire was a witness. With his slight oversuppleness of shoulders he had loitered in, turned his back and, while apparently browsing among the books, listened. As Murray and the Castletons were leaving they had to pass him so closely that his failure to make room caused Philip to look back. The Creole's glance met his and Philip saluted, but his only reward was a burning stare which later rested on the ladies as they departed another way.

Mr. Murray, walking up Chartres Street between his older and younger friend and halting every few yards to declare New Orleans the most picturesque city in the United States—"and as ill-kept as New York if ye care to boast it"—explained that the war,

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soon to call him home, was meantime keeping him here on business for his government.

On Sunday Philip gave his address to a crowded house. "The negro," murmured the judge to the Scot, in a front seat, "is always eager to hear any white man's counsel and to see its wisdom if he can."

Besides those two and the two missionary ladies there was but one white hearer in the audience. From his platform seat between the black and white presidents, of the literary society and the college, Philip espied, far back near the entrance, Zéphire.

A radical fault in his discourse was its forlorn futility as coming from a Southerner. "Friends and fellow citizens," he began, "I can hope for no whole-hearted acceptance of what I have to say unless while I bear in mind that you are colored you kindly forget that I am white." The Scot grunted to the judge:

"Too Northern to please any Southerner and too Southern to please any Northerner." In fact, Zéphire, near the door, swelled and stiffened, while many dark faces wore a humble perplexity. However, the lecturer entered into a laudation of the countless benefits of municipal, State, and national government to even the least privileged elements of a people and appealed to his hearers so to live up to these benefits as to live down the few drawbacks which, the world over, in one degree or another, mar them. "When we find the fly in the ointment," he asked, "which shall we strive to make the most of, the fly or the ointment?" (Applause.)

Remembering Ovide's word about the Jews and the

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"inner liberty," and reminding his audience of their habit of paralleling their case with that of ancient Israel, he exhorted them to extend the parallel into present times and win out as modern Israel has won out or is winning out. "By use of the splendid rights you now enjoy—which millions of white men are still deprived of—make yourselves privately so estimable and publicly so valuable that the few rights yet denied you will come by natural gravitation if not to you to your children's children." (Faint applause.) "Don't stay down because you can't take the elevator. Take the stairs—or even the fire-escape!—and enter your complaints on the top floor." (Applause heartier but chiefly from the literary society.)

At the close Ovide, the college president, his wife and daughter, and a good dozen of the darker race or the half-and-half gratefully shook the speaker's hand. Nevertheless Philip, though he went away between the Scot and the judge, looking very gallant, went silent, mentally aching. Not a remark on his address did either of his elders offer, but talked of the Aisne, of Antwerp and Calais, and of crimes between whole nations, so vast and hideous, so brazen and calamitous, that to dwell with censure and alarm on poor Dixie's well-meant mistakes argued a political pedantry too ill-timed and grotesque to be worthy a scholar or a gentleman.

Well, who had dwelt with censure and alarm? he asked himself, because at every step every facet of his thought reflected the image of Rosalie Durel, and it

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was her glorious eyes that seemed mutely to accuse him. No, his one great care had been to make clear that, whatever his convictions, his supreme sympathies and solicitudes were for his own race. If that did not squarely cover the point, so much the worse; it was the best his best manhood could say even to those dear eyes. He longed to be a few minutes alone with the judge, but the Scot walked on St. Charles Avenue with them a mile or more beyond his hotel. When he halted he said to Philip:

"I hear you're chosen on grand jury."

"And they've made him its chairman," said the judge.

But Philip asked abruptly: "What did you think of my performance just now?"

"Man, 'twas over their heads, but 'twas better than I expected."

"And still——?"

"Still I'm wondering what you'd have said to an audience of your own white people?"

"What can one say while all Europe's afire?"

"More than ever! I'd say don't drop your own political day's work to gape at our ruin. Be warnned by us. Vawst as it is, somewhere in our heedless yesterdays it began as a gerrm!"

"The kingdom of Satan is like a grain of mustard-seed?"

"Ay, and far smaller! Gentlemen, it's as true in politics as in medicine that the prrofoundest evils are invisible to the common eye. May the good Lorrd

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deliver y'r Dixie from snuggling down in any politics that are not good political sanitation. Well—" he gave his hand. "I'm leaving you day after to-morrow."

The hour of the traveller's departure was a very early one but Philip was at the station to speed him. "You're good," said the Briton, "and I'm glad, for I've news for you. Paying congee to the Smiths lawst night they told me that those yacht people, you know——?"

Yes, Philip knew.

"Are expected back in ten days, and the Smiths are to give them a reception. The Durels are to be invited, of course, and the Castletons. Also they tell me your Sunday talk, badly misreported, is raising a devil of a dust." The train began to move. "Hah! and I'd something to tell you about that cousin at the bottom o' the alphabet, but—" They could only wave farewell.

XVIII

ALSO THEY MANŒUVRE

DAY by day, wherever Philip went, however employed—before his classes, at club or theatre, on the sidewalk, in the street-cars—he found himself placidly slighted.

Wherever he sat the seat next him stood vacant. In New Orleans the handshake, the pause on the curbstone for a social word, was universal, but now in his case the pause, the handshake, all but ceased, except that here and there an old playmate overdid it.

Outwardly he remained unruffled, of course, but he was acutely pained. Often the worthiest “love a fight”—the humor of it. Not he; he could see no humor in it. And that vexed him with himself. Moreover, here was no fight. He wished they would wait till he should say or do something not so utterly trivial that cavil’s smallest pincers could hardly pick it up. He might have found comfort in the thought that this was an every-day experience to most public men; but he did not want comfort—would be ashamed to be comforted after having confessed to an alien race the wrong-doings of his own, however undeniable.

He was silent even to the judge, who, he saw, was getting a lighter share of the same trial. That also hurt him and when a bit of State history in one of the

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scrap-books required him to consult Ovide he willingly met the old bookman's conversational advances half-way, letting himself fancy Rosalie a hearer, though she was still on the yacht. For so did his love consume him that everything with which he had to do was weighed and measured by its supposable bearing on her.

It was in such a mind that he by and by found himself saying: "Really, Landry, your old-time abolitionist friends had certain advantages over to-day's."

"Yes," said Ovide, with his touch of pomp, "conditions were more flagrant, sir. Also they had faith in us."

"They were illusioned; we are disillusioned."

"Yes," Ovide further admitted, "to most of the world my people are no longer even interesting."

"Yet the world," said Philip, "has really grown kinder. Trouble is, it's harder than ever for even the kindest to take the colored race in earnest. Pardon me, but it seems a race of children."

"Say, rather, a child race, professor, which every peasantry is, isn't it? But we're not all children and we claim the inalienable, individual child's right to grow up to such modern manhood as we individually can. Sir, our deprivation of that right is the rock our ship of freedom has stuck on these fifty years."

Philip gathered himself for a rejoinder which he believed to be formidable, but a buyer thrust a book under the old man's eyes to know its price, and Philip left, continuing the debate in his mind alone. No,

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not alone, but with that one, far at sea, with whom he unceasingly communed.

The owner of the yacht was a famous Northern railway president whom the war had caught cruising in the Gulf and whose wife, cruising with him, would not hear of his hazarding the Atlantic while any war-ship thereon, British or German, could to their peril make any imaginable mistake. Their New Orleans friends, the Smiths, lived up-town, and the lofty rooms of their wide house allowed a very large assemblage, of which a full third this time was Creole.

The city's choicest people were there—masters and mistresses of all its heights of power. Here English was spoken with the Creole accent, there French with a sturdy American flavor, and here and there a tranquil two or three called each other, with an Oriental blandness, such names as Isidore and Rachel. Arts and letters were not wholly unrepresented, the ribbon of the Legion of Honor might be seen and young girls were plentiful and beautiful. More than one were from South America. The two elder Durels appeared. Madame shone fair among the fairest. Her son maintained a most finished and capable exterior, though gladly accepting a seat as often as the rigor of the occasion permitted, and looking pitifully weary whenever safe from observation. Zéphire, too, was present, conspicuous, outspoken, gay, widely acquainted.

Naturally in so general a gathering there were incongruities. There was an affable, showy man whom

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Zéphire twice and again sought out to be jovial with, and who must have been valued for something much better than the enterprise which had won him a fortune, for even Alphonse Durel, in moments of actual contact, showed him marked though unsmiling consideration. He was now a bold operator in cotton—quite the proper thing—but had been lessee of the State penitentiary before the abominations of the “private lease system” had brought about its own abolition. He and Zéphire, Philip had heard at the first session of his grand jury, had long been and were yet “in cahoot,” to borrow a term from the Scot’s note-book.

Another oddity was the presence of that winsome mother and daughter from the missionary college. Holden was their name. It seems they were cousins of the railway president’s wife. The Smiths, who, by the by, were of Miss Castleton’s church, had felt compelled to invite these bright-eyed social starvelings, and they had known no better than to come. The daughter had urged the venture, with Philip Castleton in the middle of her mind. They made no acquaintance beyond Philip’s aunt, on whom Mrs. Smith gracefully unloaded them. Oddly, they turned out to be old friends of two or three of the aunt’s dearest missionaries in Singapore and Manila. Nevertheless, it was some faltered word of hers that caused them to decline the escort of Philip and the judge to the refreshment-room, and they were the first to leave, going unaware that they had made staying more awkward for the Castletons, all three.

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These, the Castletons, were tempted to wonder if they were really themselves, into such unimportance had they fallen. No one was rude, but they remained unsought, and those whom Philip especially approached had little to say, nothing to ask, and were easily distracted. There was one exception, Mme. Durel. Her sweetness, interest, and grace were as modestly forthcoming to them as to the most courted, and gave her the spiritual guise and fragrance of a blossoming rose-tree in its fiftieth year. So she was to all eyes, but above all to the judge's and Philip's. To Philip's inquiries she replied that Rosalie was at another party, but would soon arrive, and that all summer she, Rosalie, had lacked vigor, spirit—"may-be bic-cause malaria." Also that the yacht trip had proved hardly "worse w'ile; di'n' do no good."

XIX

AT AN UP-TOWN RECEPTION

WHILE these words were tinkling on his heart the girl herself appeared, at madame's side; or, as we may say, the brightest star in heaven floated from a cloud and stood beside the moon. A hundred adroit eyes noted the star and her worshipper. Would she too show poor attention, have little to say and nothing to ask? Not so. Her opening word smote him with a thrill. In no dream of her could glance or tone have shed on him a greeting so radiantly kind. And this was no dream, for from three directions through the twittering crowd three remote observers witnessed it unwillingly—monsieur, Miss Castleton, and Zéphire.

In a moment Philip was offering the same escort which Emily Holden had most reluctantly denied herself. Which being again declined, he proposed a seat beside madame. But Rosalie chose to stand. With friends pressing in upon her from all sides, she praised the superiority of the outer air, an air as of midsummer, said with careful lightness, "I suppose presently I'll maybe find myself in the garden," and turned to others, with affectionate greetings.

The garden was a very attractive one, whose wealth of unusual flowers offered ample excuse for anybody seeming to forget the claims and lures of the social

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moment, and Philip, unaccompanied, had only to drift there with the prattling tide and woo the roses while awaiting their queen. But roses will not be wooed by the restless, and when he began to fear that she had been set to pour tea or that her two seniors and she had taken their leave, he found her in the nearest doorway, held there by two other Creole girls. However, these took wing, and soon he and she were once more among the flowers. "Now tell me," he said, "how you've passed the long summer."

"Long? For you? At those gay Virginia places?"

"Their gayety didn't shorten it. To me, in at least one respect, it was one 'long, long, weary day'; I've been so vexed with myself ever since we were last in a garden together, and so wishful to confess it."

"And to take back all you said, eh?"

"No, that's the one thing I can't do, mademoiselle."

From the girl came a faint start, a shade of distress, a restraining stir of the hand, and then a dissimulating lightness: "Ah, 'long, long, weary'—that's made in Germany, that quotation! You shouldn't quote that to me when I've been ever since the 1st of August knit-knit-knitting for those French soldiers, and now am meet-meet-meeting for the Red Cross." She turned back toward the house.

For into view a short way off had come the two male Durels, Zéphire urging some matter on monsieur with much warmth. Yet she spoke on:

"But you, if the summer had not been so long and weary I would say tell me *how you've* passed it. But"

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—she dropped her voice, Zéphire was approaching them —“for that you’ll have to come at Esplanade Avenue. Mère tells me to invite you.”

Philip’s heart leaped. “I will!” he said in hurried undertone, and Zéphire reached them. Rosalie halted. Philip bowed and stepped away to her father.

Monsieur’s reception of him was flawless in speech, but his face was not the face that Philip had parted with at Biloxi. Yet the lover, with Rosalie’s and madame’s invitation still ringing in his heart, could not believe this frigidity was meant for him. With happy animation he said to monsieur, whose arms were folded: “So, Mr. Durel, your house, I see, is once more a home.”

“Yes, sir, and”—the father watched his daughter and Zéphire pass indoors—“a home is a sacred. We are juz’ riturning there. I’ll bid you good evening, sir.”

Philip caught a breath. “Oh—let me say, sir”—he brightened afresh—“I’ve just been invited to call—in your restored paradise.”

Monsieur slowly shook his head. “Mr. Cazzleton, I rigret to tell you, tha’z a mizunderstanding.”

“You mean to say——?”

The Creole shrugged and went back a step. “That home is a very small. I’m sure that call wou’n’ be pleasant for a gen’leman that ricquire his friend’ to forget he’s white. An’ neither for yo’ gran’father. Well, good evening.”

“Good evening,” said Philip. Turning, he met the judge.

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"Why, Phil! What——?"

"Don't ask me, please; not here, now."

"All right. Come, auntie wants to tell the Smiths we've had a delightful time."

The three motored home bright enough and in their own hall Miss Castleton, so prettily middle-aged, perfectly dressed, and socially excellent, still smiled while caressing Philip's shoulder and beckoning him upstairs. But when she faced him in her room she was in tears.

"Auntie! what a shame for them to punish you for me!"

"My boy! I can leave them to their conscience as I leave you to yours! But, oh, if you'd only thought—would only yet think——"

"What, dear, who, which?"

"If you'd only recognize that whatever the great majority of a people passionately believe to be true and right is almost sure to be so!"

"Passionately, auntie? History doesn't say so."

"Ah, history! Your stereotyped argument!"

"Oh, that it were Dixie's! But we won't argue, auntie; that's not what I came up to say."

"Did you come up to tell me something?"

"I did. You saw us go into the garden?"

"Yes"—Philip knew no one who could so winsomely mingle grief and love as his aunt—"I saw you, Phil."

"Well," he said, "out there I—I walked the plank."

She hung an instant between gratification and re-

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sentment. Then—"Rosalie Durel dared to reject you?"

"Her father did. He's very daring. To cap this general situation he's formally, flatly excommunicated me."

"Alpho'"—Miss Castleton caught herself—"Mr. Durel had the face to do that?"

"Oh, yes. You spoke his first name, auntie. There's something about him I'd like to ask."

"Don't, dear boy, don't. I will say this much: Long before you—even before I—was born, your grandfather—oh—ask him. Phil, is he excommunicated, too?"

"Yes. If anybody can tell me why——"

The lady did not say she could or could not, but after a pause—"Oh, Philip! And this ends all, doesn't it?"

"Doesn't end my feeling for her; only heightens it."

"You—you surely won't attempt in any way to—to circumvent her father, will you?"

"No, as to that you may rest easy."

"Ah, my Christian gentleman!"

Philip laughed. "I'd like to be a Christian ruffian; that's the newest invention. Don't commend me; I know mighty well that nobody'll ever win her by any thievery, highhanded or underhanded."

"Oh, you wouldn't want a girl you could win that way!"

"No. No, I suppose not—under these circumstances. I owe that to your bringing up."

"My darling! My heart bleeds for you," said the aunt, but it bled no tears. Her tears had dried.

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"Thanks." he said. "But you're glad, too, aren't you?"

"Oh, my dear—yes. I'm so glad that I—if I'd ever sung a tune in my life—I could sing the doxology!"

The nephew smiled. "Let's omit the doxology. I came up also to ask a question."

"Oh, Phil, I can't——"

"It's not as to *him* or the judge, either; I've nearly guessed out both those things. But when you were talking to those two poor little ladies—N. T.'s——"

"Those Holdens? It was very hard to do, Phil."

"Yet you did it, sweet. And I heard you tell them about our church inspectors of missions begging you to go with them to the Far East, and of your refusing, although it's been your lifelong dream to go. Didn't I hear that?"

"Yes, dear, though I didn't intend you should."

"So that's all off, is it—your part of it?"

"My dear, no. I thought it was, till now. But now that this affair of yours is off, bless God for his wonderful ways, I can go. I'll write the board to-night."

"And you were stifling a lifelong wish on my account!"

"Whatever's your account is mine, Phil."

"Well, auntie"—holding the door ajar—"maybe I'm flippant, but that's what I call being too good— Yes, judge, I'm coming."

XX

BUT LOVE CAN LIVE ON LOVE

WEEKS wore by. The great city's life, so clamorous, picturesque, unique, grew as steadily in volume and energy as a rise in its vast river.

In all the breathings and pulsings of its multiple functions—commercial, governmental, social, festal—it daily, nightly breathed, drank, that wonder of itself which makes the human multitude the inspiration of prophets and the intoxication of the crowd.

Winter came on, by turns windy as March, wet as April, warm as May, but always freighted with flowers and fruits in place of ice and snow. The Castletons, in their rounds of social activity, were far from over-taxed; the Durels, in theirs, still paid the bulk of their social tax below "Can-al" Street, and nothing again brought the trios quite together.

The nearest approach of any two of them occurred thrice—and thrice again—on the most historic side of that most historic spot in the Mississippi Valley, Jackson Square, the city's old Place d'Armes. There at early evening of Saturdays if not oftener, Philip, solitarily wandering, entered the old Cabildo and sped up its ancient stair into the rooms of the Historical Society on some real enough errand of research, but soon returned more meditatively down and, as if on the spur

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of the moment, crossed the adjoining flagged alley, passed into the unlighted cathedral and took the nearest pew. There, at times alone, at times among more genuinely chance listeners, while distant Canal Street and its tributaries noisily drank their own wonder, he drank the rehearsings of the unseen, overhead choir, one supreme voice of which was to him the call of the poet's blessed damosel from heaven's battlements.

Yet he was always first out of the church and earliest to vanish in the gloom of the squalid old streets lying round about as fast asleep as the Orleans princes whose names they bear. One evening, in the middle of the singing, an old negro woman came among the listeners and sat near enough for him to observe her extreme neatness, though without seeing that she took note of him. In a minute her place was empty again. To him a stranger, he was not so to her, for she was that "sizter to the wife of Ovide," who "sinze long time" had been a domestic in the Durel household and at that moment was Rosalie's escort.

So thereafter Rosalie knew but sang no worse for knowing, and Philip continued to come but also to vanish before she and her duenna could ever trip down and out and motor away. And grand'mère knew, but said nothing even to Rosalie save in that serene wordless way so adequate to them. But one night, at that St. Peter Street, "Veau-qui-tette Café" corner just above the Cabildo, a quiet voice said: "Well, Phil?"

Composedly talking—of anything but the reason of this intrusion—the judge and he walked up by Ovide's

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closed shop and to and around a square once full of historic remains, now wholly covered by the State's and city's marble court-house, which, as they passed, towered out of its black surroundings white and stately in the moonlight. But as they turned from it up Royal Street the judge chose to say that he had come prompted by thought of the perils of traversing these narrow, lonely streets by night.

"So you risked them yourself," laughed Philip.

"Oh," the judge as playfully replied, "I risked nothing but the ordinary hold-up. I'm no grand juryman."

"Pooh! you're a lot more. Anyway, there's nothing out of the common before the grand jury just now."

The two moved on in silence and as they passed through the tawdry night splendors of Canal and St. Charles Streets something prompted one thought to both men. "Zéphire Durel," said the judge, "lives just behind the cathedral, does he not, in Orleans Street?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Think he's never seen you there, or watched for you?"

"No. Oh, no, after all he's a gentleman—of his kind; not Creole kind, just his kind. If he ever wants anything of me he'll say it to my face."

"I think so. But Ovide—his shop was still open as I passed down—tells me Zéphire knows where you are every Saturday evening, but is preoccupied with others."

"Sensible Zéphire! Whereabouts?"

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"Oh, t'other end of Orleans Street, in a regular Saturday-night festivity where a former flame of his——"

"Philomèle? Clairvoyante?"

"Yes—is humbly content to be the leading chaperon while he's the beau of the ball."

"How should Ovide know all that?"

"By trying to get a young quadroon girl, their dupe, Ovide's kin, away from them."

The walk continued. The homeward path was long, but the air was balmy, the moon was high, and the two comrades were in the dearest company fate could allow them. By and by Philip spoke abruptly: "We believe, don't we, as devoutly as any Durel, in safeguarding racial purity?"

"Of course we do. What of it?"

"Are we, our people, by our present passionately upheld methods, doing that effectively, righteously, or even decently?"

"You're thinking, I suppose, of those two——"

"No, sir, I'm thinking of millions. I'm not thinking of the cruel temptations those methods thrust upon the sort of girl Zéphire's trying to devour, and Ovide to save. I'm thinking of the grinding humiliations thrust upon her kin, who dare not, on their lives, defend her as any kinsman would be honored for doing if she, however forlorn a fool, were only white." The words ran on, their warmth rising as though the judge were contradicting.

He tried to break in, but Philip would not be stopped. "Yes, oh, yes, it's 'academic,' in this day

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of colossal horrors. To a world in physical agony, it's 'academic.' It's not academic to Ovide, I reckon, sir. To him it's the bow of the yoke we hold on ten millions of his race, calling that yoke an absolute essential of our daily safety."

The judge tried the salve of concession. "It's not essential. It is itself a peril and a shame if only for the way it warps our sense of justice and honor. But why——?"

Philip started again: "Thank you for that word, though it's for that, you know, that we're not wanted under any Durel's roof, even Zéphire's. It proves us 'in love with the negro.' Why, sir," he laughed, "I'm that far from being so that I can't divine why he was ever put on the earth. He can't himself—says he can't! But he's here and if we ill-treat him the shame and the peril of doing so, though he should never strike back, is mainly ours."

"Civilization and progress being mainly ours," assented the judge. "But, Phil, why should you and I——?"

"Yes, civilization! What lessons that frightful war over yonder is hurling at us! Here's our whole nation debating 'unpreparedness.' I tell you, for a people, armed or unarmed, not to keep their hearts fortified with clear, true principles of justice and magnanimity is of all conceivable unpreparedness the worst. *Principles* can't be made overnight and put on next day at a call to arms!"

The judge smiled yet more. "True, Phil; but why

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say all this to me here, to-night? You don't always go to the cathedral loaded with this, do you?"

"Yes! My dear sir, yes! Yearning to say it to her!"

"But you don't say it. You unload on me."

"I shall say it yet. My chance will come. I'll not force it. By some God-sent accident, in broad day, under His unforbidden roof, the open sky, I'll have my hour."

"My dear fellow, I hope you may. But you'll not choose your theme; she'll do that."

At Philip's gesture the two halted. "Judge, you know it isn't because of her beauty of face, form, or voice that I can't take no for an answer. You know it's her white-flamed passion for beauty in things not herself, and for all loveliness and truth, certainly not excepting public justice or human kindness. You see how she's worshipped by all nearest about her—family, friends, servants, little children, even rival beauties and their mothers. Can you think she wouldn't hear me? Or, hearing, wouldn't honor me?" The pair walked on.

Down in Esplanade Avenue Mme. Durel and her son came home from a bridge-party, mounted the stair, and said good night. She tapped at a chamber-door and a voice invited her in. Rosalie came to her slowly from a moonlit window. The two caressed each other's shoulders. Rosalie bowed her head. Grand'mère kissed it, and the girl sank to her knees, weeping bitterly.

XXI

AND A GOD-SENT ACCIDENT OR TWO

WELL, one day it actually happened.

Somewhere up the Mississippi a certain Dane—or Swede—fresh from his own land, but speaking English, had encountered Mr. Murray and received from him a line of introduction to the judge and Philip.

Philip had tried to make New Orleans attractive to this stranger historically, but his sluggish interest was wholly modern and commercial; his one wish was to be shown the harbor, particularly its new docks, and grain and cotton-shipping facilities, and to that end the three had made an appointment.

The afternoon was soft and bright. Except that ancient square then newly occupied by the great white hall of justice already mentioned as having blotted out so many relics of history and romance in the midst of the old Creole quarter, no spot near the heart of the city had thus far been so radically modernized and stripped of the picturesque as had the steamboat-landing. So, at any rate, Philip and the judge had warned their stolid traveller. Its former hurly-burly of action, sound, wind, sunlight, and color, they said, its confusion of tongues, of freights, was well-nigh gone. Its commercial war-dance had tamed down to the meek emaciation of an old ox turned out to die. The mag-

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nified city's magnified trade was divorced from the boats and married to the railroads. The wharfs, where the beautiful old side-wheel steamers—the *Natchez*, the *Lee*, the *Votaress*, *Paragon*, *Enchantress*—could get only their cutwaters in and unload and reload across their bows, stood now deserted.

There, regularly twice a day, from a point near the head of Poydras Street, a melancholy stern-wheeler made a circuit of the harbor to show it to a few, generally a very few, sightseers. At brief intervals for an hour before she went her woebegone voice bellowed its invitation imploringly down into the city. Residents seldom heeded it, and this time the two Castletons would not have noticed it but for their appointment—to meet the Scandinavian—at the boat's gangway. They were barely in time. She backed out as they crossed her gang-plank. Yet neither on the wharf nor her guards did they espy their stranger. Instead they discovered that there were two see-the-harbor boats. The other was still at her wharf, farther below, beyond the Canal Street ferry. The traveller was probably there, awaiting them. Now she dolefully mooded, as if specially for the Castletons. Their boat went by her, down-stream, and before they had got abreast the cathedral and Jackson Square Philip's prayed-for accident occurred.

An hour or two earlier Mme. Durel and Rosalie had been doing errands in the fashionable shopping district about Canal Street. In Royal Street they had left with a mender of fine china, for repair, a large and

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costly bowl which their old negro maid servant, so often Rosalie's attendant, had brought along. Later they had lunched at Antoine's, but when they might have resumed their shopping Rosalie had no heart for it. She had come from home because home was so intolerably quiet, and now the shops and department stores were intolerable for their commotion and at every few steps one met friends and had to talk and give account of one's health.

Then madame remembered "sinze how very long" she had suffered for want of a penknife and that the best place to get one was in Canal Street near the river and quite away from the crowd. Past there ran street-cars that would take them along the river-front, by the cathedral, into Esplanade Avenue and to their own door. As they went Rosalie threw off half her listlessness. Anything out of the daily routine was better than anything in it, and to go somewhere, anywhere, off the daily path, was better than the path. They had got the penknife and were about to hail the car when Rosalie, preferring any distant sight to any near one, noticed the Canal Street ferry-boat sidling up to its wharf. New Orleans people had an old custom of mitigating hot summer afternoons by continuous round trips over the ferries. Besides this ferry there were four up-town and two or three down-town. On the one at Esplanade Avenue the Durels had often given themselves this mild indulgence.

"Mère!" said the girl, "month January, air June, and with Euphrosine"—that was their attendant—"a

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ferry-trip—come!” The levee there is broad; only by haste and luck could they be in time. Her pulse quickened. She led the way. They went Indian file.

“The millionth chance!” she said in her heart, as she had been saying at every turn and hour for weeks. “Heaven knows if by a millionth chance *he* may be there!”

The distant ferry-bell tapped; they went faster. But a freight-train crawled across their path, interminably cluck-cluck-clucking, until L. & N., C. B. & Q., L. S. & M. S., and a dozen other symbols of the big world’s work became terms of dumb exasperation. At last the passing caboose left the way open and they hurried on; but the ferry tapped good-by and they stopped short again in the dusty sunshine, while old Euphrosine exclaimed in tragic despair: “Ding, dong, bell, kitty’s in de well!”

The ferry-boat swung out and shuffled away for the “Algiers” shore, and then what should fill the ear but the call of the Poydras street harbor excursion-boat in agony for passengers. “Mère!” cried Rosalie in the midst of the din, “Trancadillo! the billow, billow!”

“Oui!” laughed madame, “en avant, grenadiers!” and soon they were on board and mounting from deck to deck. They found chairs on the hurricane-roof, at the outer side of the texas, where they could see across the river, into “Algiers,” and had just sat down when close overhead roared the boat’s last wail for more of such freight.

Two men came, belated. The ladies did not see

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them, but heard a passenger tell how the boat had begun to back out when they crossed the gang-plank. Now she headed down the river, and the ladies and Euphrosine stood boldly on the skylight-roof and looked across into the city; the city so wonderfully grown, so storied, so proudly loved. There, presently, was Canal Street, in full length and breadth, so fondly prized yet so gladly escaped from; and now it was gone. Here came Jackson Square and the dear old cathedral. But also, behind the onlookers, on the deck, came quiet footsteps, and two refined male voices which, for all their composure, strung higher every nerve in Rosalie's frame. Her heart had barely time to miss a beat when Philip stood before her.

A single look from each upon the other told that each had suffered, but the one gleam of joy which illumined her word of salutation sweetened all bygone heartache.

As if purely for the mirth of it the two men began to explain, each to his own hearer, how they happened to be aboard; and then, purely for the mirth of it, of course, the Durels told the story of the ferry-boat and the train. To say they did so is enough and safest; to try to tell how it was told would be trying to handle a soap-bubble. Not once only to the judge, that earlier night, returning from the cathedral, but again and again to himself, Philip had said that the spring of his worship of Rosalie was not her loveliness to the mere eye or ear, but her passion for truth, beauty, and gladness, and her power to find them in other beings and in things beyond herself. Yet now, asking his own

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mind how one was to divide the inner charm from the outer, he was loftily glad to get no reply. His joy showed so plainly that because of strangers' glances she hastened to finish:

"And now you shall show us the harbor."

But largely it was she who showed it to him. Or so he thought, and in the showing of it two or three simple causes quite unnoted by him worked in her a new charm on his heart. One was the hidden rapture of reunion with him; another was a certain jealousy for the scene, the region, its whole civic scheme, stirred by a fear of his disparagements; and a third was a gentle intolerance of that touch of bookishness which his critics imputed to even his liveliest appreciations. He knew the harbor historically; the historic meanings of its names, places, structures, enterprises. He told the romance of them wherever they had dropped out of the present and joined themselves to the past. And in all those she evinced an interest warm and bright. But over and above it she caught and pointed out, again and again, just that which he would so much rather have shown her and taught her to appreciate: The poetry of things in their present values—and present grime; dry-docks, elevators, sugar-refineries, rice-mills, foundries, shipyards, railroad-sheds, coal-fleets, and the men of all sorts and shades in all of them; the romance of their countless offices and movements in the vast machinery of a daily ongoing world.

Sweet indeed to a lover was the marvel of the Creole girl. This gift of vision she might have had without

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being a Creole, but she was doubly sweet and marvelous through the perfect simplicity of speech and Gallic unconsciousness with which she radiated its charm. If love told him truly, she wore the gift like a silken drapery, a texture as much of smiles and happy sighs as of words, that never gathered the weight of one rounded period. Oh, for half such grace in himself, to inspire younger manhood on college benches, or older manhood in the street. Unknowingly, that fair afternoon, whatever she may have been besides, she was his tutoress.

Down by the old British battle-ground they rounded to and reascended the yellow flood, past again the Vieux Carré and the steamboat-landings, and went on through the harbor's bends, turning back at length in the swirling eddies of Nine-Mile Point. On water or land there were almost as few signs of midwinter as in their own hearts. The lofty cypresses of the swamps were naked, jagged, funereal, gibbet-like in their drappings of gray moss; but the swamps were always far away, and in between, about all habitations, the few trees that stood bare were hardly to be noted amid the dark masses of evergreen magnolias, cedars, and live-oaks; and the levees, fields, and gardens were green. The pair stood at the front edge of the hurricane-deck, madame and the judge sitting and old Euphrosine standing a few steps at their back, when Rosalie broke a silence. "But why," she said, with a wave of the hand across the landscape, "why do I love this the best in all the world?"

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Philip tried to tell; tried smilingly—without the academic touch, the bookish mustiness, but with the sweetness of human fellowship and social attachment—to define in brief the true patriotism. He had hardly more than begun it before Rosalie most willingly saw that it was his personal rejoinder to the disdain of those by whom she was constantly surrounded. It allowed the true patriotism a special intensity nearest home, but required of it also a scope as universal as humanity, and a sense of incalculable personal indebtedness, beginning at home but extending to all civilization, and as old as history. He deprecated that love of country which is mere pride of country, that national complacency which is only self-esteem swollen to national dimensions; and he exalted the patriotism whose ardor demands of one's country that same integrity to all the human race which his mother country requires of him to her.

There Rosalie thrust in the name of Zéphire. At the same time she mentioned her father, the like-minded attitude of the two men on public questions, and the personal harmony which it promoted between them. While Philip asked himself why she thus spoke she contrived to put a tone of relevancy into a meditative expression of filial devotion to the widowed parent, adding the significant remark that whatever her father could not live with happily she could never consent to live with at all. Then, as if flitting from one subject to quite another, she recounted what Zéphire had told her father of Philip's sayings

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and doings in Ovide's shop and at the missionary college.

Both girl and lover found much amusement in the explanations he gave of acts, facts, words, and meanings; but both fell grave again over his elaborate excusings of Zéphire's misinterpretations of him, which he imputed to the cashier's devotion to public safety and honor and to the happiness of those endeared to him by kinship.

"Ah, kinship!" said Rosalie. "I am afraid of the kinship of Zéphire and papa. Tell me, you—I can ask nobody else—what is your opinion of my cousin Zéphire?"

"Oh!" Philip caught his breath. "Oh! my opinion of him"—he managed to smile—"ought not to guide you."

"I think it should. And I believe you ought to tell me that." She dropped her gaze to the farthest deck below, where there was least to see. "Because when you don't tell me that, and maybe pretty soon some bad luck comes to me because you didn't tell me, I think maybe afterward you'll be regretful you didn't tell me."

As plain as the river's bend which they were rounding and which brought the great city's centre into near view, seemed to Philip this great bend in his heart's desperate fortunes. He dared not call the girl's deeper meaning love and choice, but his soul cried out within him, and every vein tingled in recognition of what he could call nothing less than trust. He stood silent with eyes out on the passing flood and shore, that grew

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every moment more beautiful under long western sunbeams, intensely conscious that no silence or evasion could pay due gratitude to such a questioner. After a lapse of interminable seconds he said with a tight throat:

"Rosalie."

"Yes?"

"Your cousin is your suitor."

"Yes."

"And in every beat of my heart I am your lover."

Her gaze bent more intently on the lower deck.
"Yes."

"There is one other whom you can ask and whom, whether I have the slightest ground for hope or not, I beg you, for your own sake, to ask."

"Who?"

"The old black woman yonder behind you."

The boat roared for her Poydras Street landing. The five left it in two groups and at Canal Street the Durels boarded a car for home. They might have missed it but for a smart young Creole, a clerk in their own bank. Seeing them coming, he held the car till he could pass them in. Their radiant thanks gave him such elation that he told Zéphire of it next morning.

The cashier heard him through with exasperating coldness and was tart to every subordinate for the rest of the day. On reaching his rooms he took from his hip a costly automatic pistol, inspected its parts minutely, restored it to his pocket, perfumed a fresh handkerchief and went out again.

XXII

THE HAWK STOOPS

THAT same afternoon of the day following the harbor trip, madame, Rosalie, and old Euphrosine stood in the library, about to leave the house on a short errand. The air was bracing, their motor-car had gone to bring monsieur home, they would walk. But now a visitor was announced, whom, though a merciless stayer, madame felt bound to see.

"Go without me!" she commanded as she left the room, and a quarter of an hour later the other two were welcomed by Ovide in his shop. While Rosalie turned aside, seemingly to bury her attention in a lot of old engravings, the servant began softly to tell their errand.

"And," unexpectedly put in Rosalie without looking up from the pictures, "I must know it all first-hand."

After a few words more Ovide, by a glass rear door letting into his living-room, showed them into the company of his wife—as black as he and in silver-rimmed spectacles. He remained in the shop. A customer or two came and went. An hour ran by. Near its end the silver-spectacled wife, at the glass door, called him into the feminine council, but he was soon again in the shop.

Followed by her attendant, Rosalie came forth speak-

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ing her parting phrases lightly and volubly; but she would hardly have come at all had she known how plainly her beautiful face, her every high-spirited glance, betrayed the distress left in it by the revelation from which she was taking flight. A few yards from the shop, on the sidewalk, her escort pressed near with a soft question:

"Momselle, d'd you take notice who wuz dat come into de shop same time we 'uz a-comin' out?"

"No. I didn't see anybody."

"'T'uz de young Mr. Castlemun. He—Lawd!—don' look 'cross de street! Here come' Miché Zéphire!"

With much show of animation Zéphire crossed over. "Good evening!" he said. "I'll make you a bet you've juz' been where I'm going; ad the shop of Landry!" Even before he spoke he had read behind Rosalie's smiling eyes high desperation and swift thought.

She shook her head. "You are mistaken. You are not going there. You are coming with me. In Bourbon Street Euphrosine is leaving me and I don't want to walk home alone, neither to ride."

Instantly he thought. "Yes, *he* was there with her! She is keeping me to let him get away." Yet, much flattered, he gallantly said: "Ah, w'at a temptation! But I've *promiz'* Landry, an' a *promiz'*, you know—" He began to back off up the sidewalk. "I tell you! Walk slow! I'll ritturn!"

She affected an arch unbelief. "No; you, you'll take your time—and I the street-car."

Through one of those quaint alleys next the cathedral

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—Philip's alley, as we might say—and around a corner of Père Antoine's Garden, she and the old woman entered Orleans Street. Once the centre of fashion, it was now as quiet as a country lane. Just across the way from a heavy building of many arches, that a hundred years before had been a theatre, but had become a convent of negro nuns, a shabby Italian woman gave Rosalie a quick second glance at both face and form, not so much for their beauty as their air of purpose. In the square next beyond, over on the convent side, was the house where Philip had called on Zéphire. As Rosalie began to pass it old Euphrosine murmured:

“Yondeh de place, Miss Rose. Da's her.”

On its upper balcony, out over the sidewalk, a pretty quadroon girl sat embroidering. When the old woman cheerily bowed to her she went in. Rosalie hurriedly led on toward Congo Square, into Rampart Street and to her home.

Zéphire found Philip and Ovide in the book-shop, debating some matter in one of the scrap-books, held open between them. He let Philip speak first, yet responded with buoyant courtesy, and added a comment on the weather. “But you are too busy to notiz' that, I su'pose, eh?”

Philip smiled. “I'm not so killing busy as that.”

“No? Whiles deliv'ring all those lectures an' spitches? And with gran' jury to boot?”

“Oh, grand jury's only once a week.”

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"'Twould have to be mo' h-often to do *one* thing."

"What? To round up all the lawbreakers?"

"No, sir! But to catch even one of those damn' sneak' what ain't got the spunk to break the law! Eh?" Swifter than his words, a pair of dilated eyes silently added: "That means you!" But instantly he had forced a laugh and resumed his urbanity.

"You know, I 'ad the honor to hear yo' moze eloquent addrezz ad thad nigger college. Thad was a very surprising to me, thad addrezz. Yes, sir, I've been rif-flecting it ever sinze; an' the mo' I rif-flec' that, the mo' I fine it a wonderful. Yes, sir; that any man with the faintez' instinc' of a gentleman could be such a dog, to *ap-olo-gize* to niggers for being a white man."

Ovide stepped closer. Philip, red, motionless, deep-voiced, said: "If I thought you really wanted that explained I could easily explain it."

The accuser's voice rose: "I 'ave egxplain' it myseff, sir!" He shook his finger: "You know tha'z a personal insult to any white man what hear' it, an' you aim' that insult straight at me!"

With a note of expostulation Ovide stepped between the two. The old woman in silver-bowed spectacles appeared in the rear door. The Creole backed away saying: "Philip Cazzleton, if you wasn' a sneak an' a coward you would challenge me. But I'll supply you that omission. You'll hear from me through a frien'!" So he departed.

The old woman cried after him from her door: "Oh,

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you! De good God is long-suff'in', yit yo'—time—will—come!"

A few minutes later a boy from the nearest pharmacy informed her that she was wanted at the telephone. Soon she had gone and returned. "Yass," she said, "'t'uz Madame Jurel; her an' momselle done snuf' de fox's trail."

Ovide showed concern: "What did you tell them?"

"Small pickin's. Leas' said sooness mended. 'Nothin' broke', s's I, 'I'll be 'roun' early in de mawnin'."

In the evening of the next day Philip, while his aunt sat reading, passed the judge a missive which the latter, after scanning, retained.

"Can you arrange that, sir?" Philip asked.

"Certainly." It was Zéphire's challenge, handed Philip by Mr. Swift, the much-envied cotton-speculator, not all of whose money had been made in cotton. On the following morning the judge and Mr. Swift conferred together.

XXIII

BUT A DOVE ROBS THE HAWK

"MY—DEAR—Judge!" was one of Mr. Swift's affectionate protestations, "I'd be powerful glad to stop this thing if it can be stopped, for my own personal reasons."

"Would it be fair to ask what those are?"

"Oh, fair, yes. Yet I'd rather tell you later."

While this was being said, and while Zéphire sat busy at his desk in the bank, with its president occupied in the back office, old Euphrosine, down in Orleans Street, rang Zéphire's door-bell. The quadroon girl peeped out warily, timorously parleyed, and presently let her in. Then for an hour nothing occurred there in view from the street; but inside, toward the hour's end, the old woman did much telephoning, the girl standing by, quaking and tearfully wringing her hands.

At the same time, around in Bourbon Street, Madame Durel sat bargaining in a milliner's shop while Rosalie waited sufficiently near the entrance to keep in sight a small close-covered spring-wagon whose driver had just drawn rein at the farther curb of the pinched roadway. Presently the watcher stepped to the door.

Over beyond the vehicle a small, girlish figure, well

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dressed, but nervous and furtive, came up the sidewalk. It was the quadroone from Orleans Street. Near the wagon she slackened pace; yet she went almost by it, then hovered, stepped abruptly up to its side, spoke to the two negro nuns whom Rosalie knew to be its passengers, entered it, and was quietly borne away up-town.

With a backward glance to madame, Rosalie passed out of the shop. Madame joined her. Their automobile came up, received them, and at a leisurely distance followed the wagon. They crossed three streets, made a right turn into Canal and presently a second into Rampart, downtownward, loitered by Congo Square, and stopped at the crossing of the old rue des Ursulines. Into it the wagon had made its third right turn and they watched it jog onward until at Chartres it made its fourth and vanished. They were satisfied! A few jogs more would bring it to the convent in Orleans Street.

Their car moved on and they were soon at home. Half an hour later another wagon, uncovered, empty, came to Zéphire's door, took in Euphrosine and a trunk and by a short leftward circuit came around to the convent. There the trunk was delivered. Euphrosine walked home.

When Zéphire found his nest empty he instantly, wrathfully, laid the outrage on Philip. He thought of Ovide and his wife, but to them he could not accredit the daring for such a raid into a white man's domain. He thought of Philomèle, with her still pretty eyes a

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trifle too beady and sometimes too near together. "Absurdly jealous" she was and had got him the girl only in pay for "big money" reluctantly found for her with which to lighten a desperate pinch. But Philomèle did not fit into the case, did not meet its dramatic demands, half so precisely as did he, the rival on whom he had but yesterday heaped insult face to face and who had to-day vilely declined to meet him on the field of honor. He set forth in quest of him to shoot him on sight.

But he had hardly reached Canal Street ere reason began to whisper dissuasion, seduction. After all, there was the remote chance that the deed was Philomèle's. Five minutes with her would tell his matchless insight the truth. Her rooms were nearer by than any one not of the police might have surmised; he would drop in. Revenge could wait a bit; in the kind of heart he was proud to call his, a grievance keeps like sealed honey.

In her apartment, over a dinner ordered up by him from a pension française, their interview was highly emotional. On his way there he had begun to see that this abduction had startlingly bettered his fortunes. Not since earliest manhood had he been, domestically, so disentangled as at this very moment; so free to marry. And marriage was thus made easy just when it had become expedient, imperative. Imperative for reasons known only to him, pecuniary reasons, the full force of which it had required the shock of this hour to bring clearly to view, so immersed had

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he gradually become in his quarrel with Philip. He would reveal this imperative expediency to Philomèle! She would kick, and if, to dissuade him, she should offer to restore the girl, he would know she was the thief.

He began jauntily. It was *so* good a joke, he said, that he had come to tell his still beautiful old Philomèle. "An' bisside a joke, 'tis a gran' piez' of luck!"

She was glad. "What? The ship? Reach' port?" She meant no metaphor; the ship was a real one, bound for the Baltic and full of cotton in which, with Swift, Zéphire held a share under whose burden he staggered.

Ship, no! No such good news as that! But all the better luck for want of that good news. It was but this: Just as he was at his wits' end to know how to "fire thad li'l wench" she had up and run away—ho, ho, ho!—

Philomèle leaped to her feet in surprise and delight. Her hand-clapping rang to the ceiling. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes," said her guest, "an' now I'm free—juz' when I'm also compel'—to marry!"

On that word, that sky-wide lightning-flash, the storm broke. It took him aback; a true Louisiana storm, with tears for rain, accusations, curses and defiance for cracking thunder-peals. She had stood enough! Would stand no more! Would go straight to the bride and the bride's family and tell—everything!—if it took a week to do it!

To ride out the tempest he had to use every resource of cajolery; had to confess more than he had ever

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dreamed of breathing to mortal ear. The necessity, he tenderly argued, had come about through her, Philomèle, and was as truly her emergency as his. To pull her out of her pinch—her many, many pinches—and to keep up his margin with Swift—in this venture compelled by her needs—had forced him, over and over, to make loans to himself from certain assets not his own. These loans would presently shipwreck his fortunes and reputation together if that real ship out yonder should even be seriously delayed by the blockaders of the Channel, or if the girl he proposed to marry should suddenly be given to—some one else. On the other hand, he need never repay those loans if he could but make this marriage now. And this he could do if his dear old ever-young Philomèle would just be sensible and see in it her own advantage and happiness, which should in no degree or manner be diminished thereby.

It was two in the morning when he re-entered his rooms.

XXIV

IN BITTER AIRS

ABOUT a week after Zéphire's mishap there came one of those mid-January days when—as in New England they say that at such and such points it was “thirty below”—they were saying in New Orleans as impressively that it was “below thirty” and that ice had been seen!

The gardens bloomed on and camphor-trees, laburnums, oaks, magnolias, and palms spread above them, low and high, as green as June; but the banana shivered in its summer rags, and ladies shuddered at the “bitter air.” In the evening the Castletons drew near their fire of soft coal in a small open grate; the Durels drew near theirs.

Without visible sign the Creole three were facing a crisis. In their usual tones they spoke their usual French, though now and then some such term as “below thirty” was in English. As a picture of domestic peace they might have inspired a painter; and yet, despite their placid tones, the firelight glow, and every appointment of comfort, there was an unconfessed winter inside the home.

By and by, without preface, monsieur handed Rosalie a note. Madame, as it passed, saw the monogram of Zéphire. Both women had been expecting the mis-

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sive for a day or two. There had been long conferences between them, as also between the father and daughter, the father and Zéphire, and the father and grand'mère. Rosalie did not at once open the note. Her manner was deliberate. She gazed into the fire. Yet as she shaded her eyes with the missive it shook, when she opened and read it it shook more, and when she folded it again, small, it still shook.

Madame reached out, drew it free and read it. It was Zéphire's request that he be allowed to call on a special mission the next afternoon. Rosalie spoke, looking into her father's face. Had she looked away while speaking it would have been for the first time in her life. "I'd rather not see him," she said, "unless you greatly desire it."

"I greatly do," the father replied. "As for what you say to him you have your free American choice." He paused and she knew that he was thinking in bitter anger, while he knew she was thinking in bitter grief, of another suitor. "Zéphire Durel," he resumed, "we may accept or reject; but we must treat him as his name, at least, demands."

"Yes," she meekly responded, and was silent a full minute. Then she said: "You have freely admitted I believe, to 'mère, that Zéphire's past life——"

Madame gently intervened: "Ah, chérie, you will not speak of such matters to your father?"

"Yes. To use my whole American choice is not in me; but that much of it—I must."

The father's reply was prompt: "I freely admit what

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you have in mind. Zéphire has as freely admitted it to me. And I answer you as I have answered him; that what one has been is far less important than what one is going to be. My child, since you must know, not in one case among a thousand will a young man's private conduct bear high moral tests. The vital question is, are his missteps behind him or before? Zéphire, at all events, is no hypocrite—and that is rare!" He paused, and each knew again that the other's mind was on that other one.

Madame stirred to speak, but her son lifted a hand.

"Zéphire," he resumed, "did not bring me that note till he could give me his word of honor that he had cleaned up his life as a good ship is cleaned for a new voyage."

"Cher papa," asked Rosalie, "whose word of honor have you besides his own?"

The father started sharply. Then his hands shook on the arms of his chair. "My daughter," he said—and the only dry eyes there were his—"whose word has disputed, to you, the word of a Durel? I know! And I must tell you before you confront Zéphire that he whose word you have so accepted is himself—as Zéphire can tell you of his own knowledge—secretly living the very life you are imputing to Zéphire."

Madame broke in: "Ah, no, no, no! I know better than that! I—" But at Rosalie's touch she forbore. She dashed the tears from her cheeks, but Rosalie let hers fall where they might while she said:

"We need not speak of that one; he is dismissed."

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Monsieur winced in open consternation: "Dismissed?"

"From my—mind. Yes, I cannot choose against the will of a father who does not bid me choose against my own."

"But, my daughter—my God, what will you do?"

"Have I not that small inheritance from—my mother?"

"Assuredly; in the bank, of course."

"To be mine when I marry, or decide I will not?"

"Yes, truly, but——"

"That time is come. I choose the lyric stage."

The father closed his eyes, pressed his temples, rose, and turned away shaking his head: "Ah, my God, no, Rosalie. Ah, no, my child. No, no, no!"

The daughter could not speak. Madame spoke instead, raising her lovely shoulders: "But what then, my son?"

There was no reply. He wandered from the room, returned to the door, said, "Good night," and passed up-stairs.

The other two lingered behind, long, planning for the lyric stage—as well as for the next afternoon.

XXV

THE TRAPPER IS TRAPPED

"SHOW him into the library," said Rosalie to Euphrosine.

"And start the fire," said madame, "and turn on the light." The afternoon was darkening early.

"I'm very pleased to see you!" said Rosalie to Zéphire, receiving him alone. Her mood had changed over night. If there was in her pleasure anything unflattering it was evident only by her not speaking French. He put that out of mind and thanked her elatedly.

Yet in his light way he felt the gravity of the moment and was free of flippancy, though, as he never received a compliment without inflating it, he said: "Tha'z a very pleasing, that ladies are always please' to see me. It almoze rim-unerate' me for staying so long a bachelor!"

He had come primed to lead the conversation and was about to launch into it in French when she, bright as May, interrupted: "Still, I think you were not, last time, in Chartres Street, so very pleased to see *me*, eh? Else you would have walked home with me, I suppose. You couldn't help that, eh? Ah, I think that was a little judgment on you that you happened to

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meet there at Ovide's somebody not very pleased to meet you."

"'Ow you heard abboud that?"

"Ah, is not the wife of Ovide the sister of Euphrosine? But you, tell me." The inquirer drew an inch nearer the hearth and him. "The weather is getting very cold. I am afraid that on the way home you are going to feel it. But—tell me about that. You met there Mr. Castleton, eh? Tell me, Zéphire; because, you know, we are cousins! What is your opinion of that gentleman?"

"Ah, I am distantly yo' cousin, yes; but—much mo'."

She stared into the fire and said pensively: "Yes."

"An' Mr. Cazzleton, he is—he is my—" He hesitated.

She looked up abruptly, roguishly, and unutterably sweet: "He is your—what?"

"He is my rival, Rosalie."

With head gaily tilted, wrist beautifully arched, she inquiringly touched her bosom.

He solemnly nodded. She smilingly shook her head. He drew nearer: "You assure me that? He—is not?"

She gravely moved an inch away, still shaking her head. "Tell me—but not in French; I wouldn't like that in French—tell me what happened at Ovide's."

"I will tell you. Thad tranzpire' by j'alouzy! W'en a man is j'alouz, Rosalie, j'alouz for the woman he love', only woman he ever love' in his life, he cann' he'p that, only if he's himseff a sneak an' a coward——"

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"That's what you called Mr. Castleton?"

"Tha'z w'at I cou'n' he'p to call him, Rosalie, an' I wizh you wou'n' look away like that, biccuse 'twas not alluding to you that I call him those epithet'. I di'n' allude to you at all. I love too much the angélique name and honor of Rosalie Durel to permit allusion. But I catch him reading, cheek an' cheek, on same page, same time, with that *black* Ovide, an' 'twas abbout his politic' that I call' him 'those epithet'."

"Ah, yes. And 'twas for that he challenged you?"

"Challenge me? Me, I had to challenge him!"

"And he fought you—I hope?" She fleetingly smiled.

"No, he basely dic-line'! But—ah! you are not well?"

She narrowed her shoulders in a shrug. "I'm well enough. He declined? But whether basely or not, that would depend. If he's got a ril-igious scrupulosity——"

Zéphire shook his head regretfully. "Ah, chère Rosalie, a man w'at beg a nigger to forget he's a w'ite man, he's got, in the heart, no ril-igiouz scrupulo-zity. An' same time I've got even mo' better proof aggainz' him than that. Will Rosalie Durel do me the honor to permit me to inform her thad proof?"

She bowed. "Tell me the worst possible. But—wait."

She touched a wall-button. "You'll have a cup of tea with me? I'm fainting for some tea. Well, go on."

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"I 'ad a frien'," he began, but paused.

Euphrosine came empty-handed and set out a low tea-table while Rosalie said: "Yes? Friend? Bachelor, eh?"

"Yes, bachelor——"

"In bachelor apartments, I suppose?"

"Yes, he——"

"With a housekeeper?"

"Yes," faltered Zéphire, abashed at her hardihood; but when he would have labored on she interrupted:

"And Mr. Castleton, he's so fond of social equality that he took a fancy to that——" She turned to the servant. "Please, Euphrosine, put on the rest of the light. Euphrosine, I suppose the tea——?"

"Yass'm, de gal's a-fetchin' it."

"I am famished for a cup of tea," said the young mistress and then resumed to Zéphire: "And Mr. Castleton he——?"

"He—yes. Pardon if I 'ave to tell you that. He——"

"Ah—wait! I don't like to hear that. That's too terrible. He—he—stole her?"

"He steal her for himseff."

"And he's—got her?—yet?—still?—now?"

"He's got her—yet—still—now!"

"Euphrosine," said Rosalie, and as the woman, on her way out, paused, a young, petite quadron appeared with the tray of refreshments and had nearly reached the table when her eyes and Zéphire's, in the room's fullest light, encountered. She was the stolen

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girl. She halted transfixed, fell to trembling, endeavored to press on, stumbled to her knees, and brought the loaded tray, with a jingling crash, safely to its place. The three beholders darted to her rescue, but instantly she was up again, in flight, and with one wild backward look and a long, growing wail, glided from the room.

Madame Durel, who had never been far away, was in the door as the girl swept out. She saw Rosalie slip from old Euphrosine's arms quietly into a chair, laughing tearfully, and then smilingly regain her feet, saying to the speechless Zéphire as step by step he withdrew:

"That's all! As the whiskey advertisements say, 'That's all'! For ever, ever, evermore, that's *all*!"

His eyes gleamed. At the farther door, which Euphrosine held open, he found his tongue. "No," he said, bowing, "tha'z not the half! Tha'z only the big-inning!"

The old woman let him out. When she returned Rosalie stood saying to madame in dismay: "I never—thought—of that! I never—thought—of that!"

"I notice' you didn't," said the old servant, "ef you means a street shoot'n'. Dat 'uz too low down fo' yo' thoughts. Me, I think it. Better le' me 'phone Miché Zoppi. He live' right roun' here in S'n' Claude Street."

"M'sieu' Zop'—Zoppi?"

"Yass'm! De detective fo' *our ba-ank*!"

"Go," said both ladies, "tell him come at once!"

XXVI

FOR THE COMMON WEAL

AT the edge of a drive in Audubon Park an automobile ran slow to let two ladies lean out and salute two others moving in the same direction on the walk.

A moment startled, then delighted, the second pair stopped short: "Why, it's Madame and Miss, eh——"

"Durel," said they in the halted car to the wife and daughter of the missionary-college president.

There was time for but a word or so, though sky and breeze were most indulgent. Rosalie contrasted them with the late "blizzard" and called the change a "return to civilized weather." The Northerners gaily assented, albeit their piety would hardly have chosen the phrase. When madame archly added, of the sky's pranks, that she had supposed "that weather had better sense," the gentle missionaries wandered off the subject.

The Durels, it appeared, were taking a sunset breathing-spell after a day in war-relief work, at which, madame said, Rosalie was trying to kill herself.

They were fresh, Rosalie put in, from a droll experience between their relief committee and a committee of the old "Société Française du Quatorze Juillet": "No, to tell it would take too long, but—another time——"

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"Ah, what time? At the Smiths' reception you said——"

"We would call on you. Yes, we intend that, soon."

"If you'll come to-morrow we'll join your war-relief!"

"Ah, most welcome! But we'll come anyhow."

They came, but the droll experience was not, was never, told; remains lost. Weightier matters took precedence.

Philip's aunt, in one of the rashest of her many poignant moments at the Smiths' reception, had given the Holden ladies the same promise to call of which they now reminded the Durels. What had tipped her scales in their favor was the fact that, of a sort, they were missionaries! "From Greenland's icy mountains" was Miss Castleton's Marseillaise. She had a passion for propaganda, honestly mistaking it for as pure religion as any defined by St. James, if not purer. In her it was that congenital zeal for domination which was also the spring of her intense antipathy to the dominating, the tyrannizing sex; to all that sex save Philip; he was hers, her possession, by victory over both sexes. And by the bye, be it Philip's merit or fault, he had never discovered these qualities in his handsome, devout, highly finished, benevolent, almost fashionable foster-mother, though Rosalie had seen them even at Vanity Fair. But that is a digression.

The Holdens also had made a promise; had offered Miss Castleton letters—letters social, unofficial, to other missionaries, in the Orient; to more real ones

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than they, as they modestly said, and as Miss Castleton privately thought. So when, an hour after meeting the Durels, they ventured to telephone Miss Castleton and to mention the letters, and she gratefully replied that she was planning to call on such a day, and they asked if to-morrow would not suit, she said it would, and the Holdens felt as though they almost belonged once more to society.

She was in their little white-walled parlor when the Durels appeared; had been there long enough to receive the letters and all the counsel they had stored up to give her on Oriental travel and sojourn. Indeed, the tea being slow to come in, they had drifted to other themes and had fallen upon the ever-pleasing topic of the Creoles, down-town, up-town. On one point, on which the Northerners had had a false impression, Miss Castleton set them right. There had always been up-town Creoles, she said; up-town New Orleans had overflowed upon them, not they upon it; their ancestors were the original land-grantees.

"Indeed, yes!" the Durels chimed in, calling a roll of historic up-town names—Buerthe, Livaudais, Harper, Dugué, Toledano, Soniat-Dufossat, Ferry-Durand, and ran on into the old sad story of noble fortunes slipping from noble into ignoble hands—a most grievous thing! The five were of one mind that it was very wicked of the wicked to be so very wicked, and Mrs. Holden told Philip's aunt how gratified she had been to learn, through the newspapers, that her nephew was on the grand jury. "No, of course, no

FOR THE COMMON WEAL

one could expect Miss Castleton to be glad of it, it was——”

“Too much like having him go to war,” the aunt said.

“Yes,” the missionaries admitted. “Yet it was good to know that he was of a kind of which true soldiers and true jurymen are made, and they wished the aunt would call his attention to one evil which ought to fire the soul of every woman, and of which they could tell much.”

The response, though spoken with tearful eyes, was unsympathetic. At best the way of the grand jurymen was hard, Miss Castleton averred, however her nephew might laugh it off; hard and acutely liable to provoke deadly resentments; but for him to go hunting up public evils was altogether likely to incur only failure, odium, contempt; whereas if he waited for complaints to come to him he would be brought into immediate touch with those most willing and best able to testify, and so the public interest would be best served and at least risk.

The missionaries were encouraged; the argument seemed wise. “And now,” the mother said to the daughter, across Miss Castleton’s front, “with a grand jury led by such a friend of the friendless as Mr. Castleton, Mr. Landry and a few of his society might be moved to plead before it.”

Unknown to each other, and for dissimilar reasons, Miss Castleton and the Durels took alarm. “Who is Mr. Landry?” Miss Castleton asked, and before the

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Holdens had half explained she had risen to go. She could not even stop for tea, which had come in; could only glance at the cups with the creepy thought that any one of them might at some time have touched the lips of "Mr. Landry." She hurried away in a sort of detached sweetness.

When she was gone the Durels smiled with such frank amusement that Emily, pouring tea, made bold to say to the Creole girl, a bit anxiously: "You don't suppose she felt any repugnance to our—our tea things—on Mr. Landry's account, do you?"

"Oh, no!" said Rosalie, suddenly grave, though she and madame felt the same repugnance themselves; "I think she just remembered an engagement. But at the same time many of our American ladies—and also Creole—might feel that, yes." She accepted her cup. Madame was already sipping hers, and the Northerners fell newly in love with them, realizing what they were swallowing down besides tea.

"Yes," madame put in, "though 'tis true their servant' are of the same race as Ovide, an' those servant' doubtlezz sometime' use their china; only, of co'ze, in the kitchen!" She punctuated with just the right awkwardness—a downward thrust of one arm with the fingers spread wide and the shoulder lifted.

"Ah, yes!" cried Rosalie, repeating the gesture, "in the kitchen! But that's a tremendous difference, the kitchen. And yet still at the same time, to *see* that tremendous difference, I think you have to be pretty logical, yes!"

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The Creole pair, trying to be as candid as they could without marring courtesy; thinking, too, with all their might, of Zéphire, and alarmed at this new cause of mortal enmity between him and Philip, began, without a word of prearrangement, to aim at the same mark. They would not stifle any hunting down of public wickedness, least of all this sort; but for everybody's sake they burned to save Philip Castleton from becoming Zéphire's accuser. Rosalie felt, and knew madame felt for her, that it was her right, and her need, to learn at once whether Zéphire was to be implicated, and, above all, for her father's sake, to learn primarily whether Zéphire's corruption had tainted his fidelity as cashier of the bank.

"You know," she indulgently resumed when the Holdens' logic had mutely failed to grasp the difference she had so lucidly pointed out, "we know Ovide Landry well. He was once the slave of my great-grandfather, and his wife is sister to one of our housemaids."

The Holdens expressed their surprise and pleasure. Rosalie greatly liked their sweet, strange way of talking exclusively with the organs of speech. She went on:

"And I think that if 'mère and I tell Ovide that we'll be glad to talk over that grand-jury business with him——"

Both Northerners were startled to the front of their chairs. "Oh, if you could! If you would!"

But Rosalie had a question to ask: "Did you ever hear of Madame Philomèle?"

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"Why, she's the very foremost offender. Mr. Landry——"

"Well, I think maybe if we tell Ovide we'll stand his back while he makes those complaints——"

"Oh, that would be—oh—can you—will you do that?"

The Durels smiled to each other: "Yes, certainly. We'll be very pleased to do that." They rose. "Yes, we'll begin that immediately. That is, if you want to leave that, all, in our hands."

"Yes! Yes, indeed, we leave it all to you!"

The callers lingered to make one more point. "You know, Rosalie, w'at we juz' lately fine out."

"Ah, yes," said the girl to the Holdens, "you cannot stop anybody from being just a clairvoyante if they haven't committed a"—she was not sure of the word and let madame supply it.

"A statuary offense," said madame; "you got to prove a statuary offense."

The same matter came up once more that day, in the Castletons' evening group. The grand jury had just held its weekly sitting, and Philip was tired enough to find relief in saying things about it, maybe somewhat boyishly to the judge. One of his confessions was that to pass the long day laboring to accuse men, individual men, men whom one might know personally, to snipe them off with charges of criminal oversteppings or shortcomings—even though the labor was always and solely in defense of society and govern-

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ment—might be unselfish and patriotic, but could not possibly be pleasant.

Of course the judge reminded him that the moment the grand jury handed a case up to the court every benefit of doubt, and all clemency not dangerous to the public peace, was secured to the accused.

Philip said that was all that made the work endurable.

Such labor, the judge further suggested, was rightly both exalting and humbling.

"Oh, it's humbling, all right," the young man replied, "for it compels you to sink every tie—of friendship, acquaintanceship, kinship—into the common good as completely as though you were on the battle-line!"

There the aunt broke silence. "No, Phil, no! Ah, no, the ties of kindred are paramount!"

"Even in disregard of the public welfare?"

"Yes! Yes! You know I can't argue, any more than I can sing; but I can give instances. I can give you one right now, one that you've got to face in a few days. You're going to be petitioned—and by negroes!—a negro society!—to do something that will make you still more scorned, scorned and shunned, than you are. And I beg you now, Phil, if you love me, don't consent! Don't do it!"

"Why, daughter, what is it? How have you heard of it?"

"Father, it's to investigate the misdoings of clairvoyantes!" Miss Castleton told her story of the afternoon. She had no knowledge in particular of

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any misdoings, she rejoiced to say, or of clairvoyantes; she was only taking an irrepressible, instinctive—she could go no further.

What she was taking was a maternally hovering action against all imaginable or unimaginable assaults or snares that could threaten her one chick; and when Philip quietly, yet with a hard knot between his brows, rose and stood with his back to the mantelpiece she felt so justified that she pressed her point, looking up to him through pretty tears: "Remember, dear boy, we're about to put a continent and an ocean between us. Don't make it more cruel for me than it has to be anyhow."

Philip, looking at her, forgot all self-concern. "No, dear," he said, "I must not; I won't; I shan't make it a bit worse than I have to. But don't make a mountain out of a mole-hill—though its pitiful smallness is the main cruelty of it—and—sundry things." Yet he spoke much too absently to satisfy her yearning. He forced a general exchange of smiles and stepped out of the room. In his chamber——

"Come in," he said, ceasing to pace the floor, and the judge, entering, crossed to a window. Philip sat down.

"If auntie," the judge remarked, "knew what a trap this catches you in she'd have more ease than trouble."

"Yes, I was so tempted to tell her so that I had to get out." The young man left his seat, swinging a fist. "Of all the scapegraces this city holds, why should I

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have to hale into court just that one who has made himself my private enemy and is proclaiming me on every corner as having in pure cowardice declined his challenge? Heavens, Judge, what am I going to look like now?"

"Heavens, what do you care? The public eye——"

"Oh! I don't mean to the public eye, nor to yours, nor auntie's, nor mine!"

"Ah, that way! Yes! Unh'n. Of course, I can't inform you; I can only offer my congratulations."

"I should like to know for what."

"That it's your uncommon luck to have love tested, fire-tested, before you're committed to it for life. So now go to bed and sleep on that, will you?"

"Thank you, Judge, I will. I will, if I have to sit on myself." Philip drew out a note and began to read it.

"What's that?" asked his senior.

"A still smaller thing," Philip replied, putting it away again. It bade him prepare to be cowed on sight.

"Good night," said the judge, in the door, lingeringly.

"Good night, sir," said Philip.

XXVII

IN STORM, BY STRATAGEM

NEXT morning it rained. The wind blew a gale. Philip was so late for breakfast that the judge had gone down-town, and the aunt was dallying with the last of her coffee. She was to begin to-day to pack for her long journey, yet she stayed to keep her nephew company.

For a while her words were few and all on the subject of her preparations. But at length she said: "Phil, dear, I want you to promise your auntie one thing."

"Yes, auntie, I know you do."

"I've been wanting for weeks to ask it of you."

"Yes, dear, I know you have."

"It's no light whim I want gratified, dear; it's my heart's deep, fixed desire."

"Yes, auntie, I know it is."

She beamed affectionately: "Then why haven't you asked me to ask it?"

"Because, dear"—he pushed away his cup and changed his seat to the one nearest her—"because you mustn't. What you want to guard against is no more likely to happen than—why, auntie—than you are to get married yourself. But I love her and she knows it. She knows, as painfully as you do, that I've

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sought her love ever since—oh,—Atlantic City. What would I look like—to her—to her father—to myself—even to you—making such a promise?” He had risen and was lifting her fingers. She gazed up through her tears as on the evening before. Tears in the voice had always been adequate hitherto, but now even in the eyes they were bewilderingly futile.

“Give your dear heart entire repose,” he went on; “the thing you dread can’t happen. Some of the finest traits I love her for stand squarely in the way. Yet on their very account I pledge you no pledge.” Tenderly smiling, he kissed her hand, laid it down and was gone.

In Esplanade Avenue breakfast was as late as in Prytania Street. What a storm! What rain! Half of it in sheets, the other half torn all to swirling mist. The petite quadroom maid, the stolen one, waiting on the table, said that the cook said that the chauffeur said that the milkman, bread-man, newspaper-man, and postman all had said that certain streets were overflowed and that the storm had been terrible along the Mississippi Sound coast. Now it was abating.

In full daylight—as full as the storm’s darkness allowed—Rosalie had lingered in bed almost until now, and even with ’mère standing fondly by had literally, though laughingly, beat her brows. There was just one imperative thing to do: For reasons many—in order to prevent Zéphire’s encountering Philip; to delay Ovide’s petition to the grand jury; and to get a chance to look privately into Zéphire’s books—the

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thing to do without delay was to get the cashier, however transiently, out of town. But what a problem! Thump! thump! thump! on her temples.

Ever since that drop below thirty monsieur had had a cold that kept him constantly turning in his seat, at home or at the bank, to see if some miscreant had not left a door open. Now after breakfast, sitting at a closed window of the library with the morning paper, he was addressed by madame:

"There will be little doing at the bank to-day, Alphonse; you can stay at home."

"And, thanks to the telephone," said Rosalie at his back, with her hands on his shoulders, "you can sit by the fire and give your cold the coup de grâce."

"The fire is even now too warm."

"Well, there is the ice-pitcher; you can sit there!"

Despite her levity a figurative beating of her brows continued. If this dear father should stay at home how could Zéphire be spared from the bank? Yet blessings on the storm, for the time being it averted street encounter. She began a conversational reconnaissance: "The war news is fine, papa, is it not? Great gains in the Carpathians!"

"Yes, that is fine."

"Is there still no hope for an opera season?"

"I fear there is none."

"The papers say last year was fine for the New Orleans banks. I hope that is true, eh?"

"Yes, after all, it has been good."

"For all the banks?"

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"No, not every bank. In the later half of the year the railroads suffered from bad legislation, cotton went low, failures were very many, and some banks felt the pinch."

"Did our bank feel it?"

There was no reply.

"Papa, what is the matter with our bank—inside?"

"My daughter! There is nothing the matter inside and very little outside, only—" The father glanced to the window. "I think I will go now, the storm is quieting."

"Ah!" his mother protested, "that quiet will not last!"

"Sit still," said the daughter, "while I telephone Zéphire that anyhow this morning you will not come!" She vanished and presently was back again. "All right, he says, there is nothing—" Again she disappeared; the telephone was calling. As she once more returned, her elders sprang up, and with the word "Telegram!" she began to read from a pencilled note:

"'Biloxi! Roof leaking bad! Sailboat blown ashore! Bath-house and wharf gone! Somebody, come quick! Minerve!'"

A second time, in her heart, she blessed the storm. She glanced at madame, then spoke to her father: "You cannot go to Biloxi!"

"No," madame joined in, "you can only send Zéphire. First train is 3.25; the bank will be closed."

Monsieur shook his head. "Not Zéphire. Impossible. Whoever goes will have to stay over to-morrow."

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“But!” cried Rosalie, “what is to-morrow but Saturday? Bank open only till twelve. Zéphire can stay over even till Monday morning. And that is what we want!”

“What! Why should we want that?”

“We want him anywhere out of the city! Papa, you must listen. Zéphire has been behaving badly.”

The father tossed a hand. “Ah, bah! I know all about that. Only yesterday I called him into my office and told him: ‘Now that you have proclaimed the gentleman a coward and a sneak you are done. If he’s going to let you do that, very well; but if you go any farther you may bring about a public mention of your cousin Rosalie, and so I demand your word of honor that the matter stop right here.’”

“And he gave you his word of honor?”

“He gave me his word of honor.”

Rosalie smilingly took him by the sleeve: “Yes. Well, now we will show you how much that word is worth.”

Monsieur was instantly up in arms. “On whose word will you show me that? Not——?”

“No,” madame eagerly put in, “not Philip Cazzleton’s nor his grandfather’s.”

“No,” said Rosalie, “nor even on the word of your daughter, but of your mother.” She drew him reluctantly to a seat, waved madame into one beside it, turned away, and at the farthest window stood looking out into the storm.

Yet her alertest attention was bent inward to the

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converse behind her. There the speech, of which she could make out only an occasional word, was almost wholly madame's, with now and then an interrupting query from her father, each one less resentful than its forerunner. She caught in turn the mention of Euphrosine, Ovide, the negro nuns, the Holdens, Miss Castleton, and Philomèle.

"And so now for the moment," said monsieur to his mother, "you hold the whip by the handle."

"Yes, Rosalie holds it."

"My dear mother, there is no law against that woman for being a clairvoyante."

"Ah, that is neither here nor there. She and Zéphire——"

Rosalie had come close. "Papa," she broke in, "there is no law against him either, for being a bank cashier."

"Ah, neither is that here nor there."

"My dear papa, let us see. When you know that, on his honor, your cashier has—pardon the word—lied—to the girl he wants to marry, and to her father, and has done that to shift a still viler crime from himself to his—pardon again—his——"

"His rival in love," said madame.

The girl turned away and tossed her arms: "Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Oh!"

She faced round again. "When you know that to be true, what—as they say—are you going to do about it? What are you going to do as the chief guardian of the name of Durel, or as the son of your mother, or

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as the father of your daughter, or as the president of your bank?"

She ceased. Madame was covertly, dissuadingly pressing her hand. The father's head sank to his breast. The daughter sprang and touched a bell-button, then darted back and dropped to her knees at his. His hands, unwillingly yielded, were cold. A light footfall came in response to the bell, but madame sprang up, waving it back.

"Go! go away!" she whispered. "Send Euphrosine!"

Both father and daughter glanced after the retreating figure. It was the abducted girl. He moaned, but straightened higher and partially regathered his force. Rosalie caught new courage. She stood up. "Listen, papa, again. If Zéphire is still an honest bank officer you could not do him a finer service than this. Guardian angels have brought us this opportunity. In twenty years there may not be such another. Let me go and tell him to take the first train."

"No, you he might suspect. I will tell him myself." He went out to the instrument. Euphrosine came in.

"Never mind," said madame, "M'sieu' Alphonse was a moment faint. 'Tis pas'. Your sizter an' her husban', Euphrosine, they are pretty well?"

"Yass'm," said the housemaid, withdrawing, "she ax me to tell you dat Ovide be at yo' sarvice fo' anything lak what you done mention'. Yass'm."

The master of the house, re-entering, passed her in the doorway. "Eh? W'at is that?"

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But Rosalie cried gayly: "Don't you tell him, Euphrosine! Don't you say a word! Go!"

The father frowned, smiled, gave a soft grunt and toss and sank into an armchair: "I have told him. He is pleased. He goes on the 3.25. His own boat is unhurt."

XXVIII

BETWEEN THE BOXES AND THE BOOKS

"AND now," said Rosalie, "how will you proceed?"

"It is simple. I call in a professional accountant and examiner, a man of the highest standing both in his profession and out of it——"

Madame demurred. "Ah, Alphonse, the higher the worse!"

"My faith! How?"

"My son, it is a terrible thing to have even one man, of highest standing, to carry the secret, keeping it or not keeping it, that a Durel has betrayed his financial trust. That is not the kind of man I would choose."

"My dear mother, and what kind, then, would you choose?"

"I would choose a man of no standing at all; not honored, just honest, and loving and honoring, as if they were his own good name, the names of Ducatel and Durel."

"Yes!" cried Rosalie, "and that is Ovide Landry! Ovide is the key to the lock, the man of the hour! By birth, by all his life the appointment of a merciful heaven!"

"My God!" gasped the father. "To spy out a white man's stewardship?"

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"Yes! Yes! So to keep the secret in the family!"

"In both families," said monsieur meditatively.

"Both?" asked madame. "Both?"

"My dear mother, yes. If Zéphire has gone wrong, one of the tellers, one of the Ducatels, has gone wrong with him. No one man alone could rob my bank, but a cashier and a teller combined can skin any bank in the land."

That night the sky cleared. The next day at twelve the bank's doors stood locked and the only one in its cages was a single clerk waiting to set the time-lock and close the vault. For back in the president's office M. Durel lingered with no better purpose than to shorten a poor clerk's half-holiday while chatting idly, gaily, with the two ladies of his household, who had come for him in their motor-car. How thoughtless are the care-free rich! But now at last the giddy three came out into the bank.

"Ah, Eugène, you can go; I will close the vault myself."

"I am in no hurry," laughed Eugène heroically and was gone like a wild duck.

"Now, both you have each your little key?" asked monsieur, and the ladies showed two keys which had lain in their jewel-cases untouched for years while he supposedly, but Zéphire in fact, had held their duplicates. He flashed on the lights of the vault and entered it alone, the other two waiting silently without. To be shut inside a bank at such an hour disposes one to breathe gently and step softly in awe of

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its slumbering power, and to realize everything beyond its walls, near and far, with an unusual intensity. Out there the great city flowed and eddied, clanged and thundered, so awfully full of wrongs and vices staring and glittering, elbowing and flaunting; so quietly full of virtues and kindnesses as unseen to the heedless eye as the salt in the sea, yet keeping the great deep of humanity unspoiled.

Monsieur's face was brighter when he reappeared. In each hand he bore a safe-deposit box. "Feel their weight," he challenged, setting them on a table. Their weight was reassuring. But when madame had opened her box, and Rosalie hers, they found them full of long blank envelopes containing—

"Nothing," murmured the mother to her son, and—

"Nothing," murmured the daughter. She clasped her hands on the reclosed box and with tearful eyes but smiling face added: "As for me alone, I should be satisfied—satisfied! I would say: 'Cheap! at double the price!'"

"But, Alphonse, your own boxes?"

The banker shook his head: "I have emptied those myself. Because of others I have had to borrow much of late. All my securities are hypothecated. We are ruined, and I am one more bank president disgraced."

"Not so! Again and again, not so—unless—still others have been robbed! If not, then only Ovide will ever know, and Ovide will perfectly understand!"

"Ah, my mother, my daughter! You do not, yourselves, even now, perfectly understand. I have had

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fifty hours without sleep, in which to think that over, and if I am still an honest banker I must take at least one white man into my confidence."

"Ah, papa! . . . Ah, papa!"

"Not just to be telling a white man, my daughter, but——"

"I know why! I guess it! I know!"

"I think not. It is just what you would never guess—of me. I must tell him—though not officially—because he is foreman of the grand jury."

She flinched. "Fore'—" she murmured, as though she dreamed.

"Yes, and *only* because he holds that office."

"Ah," said madame to Rosalie, "that is the best reason!"

"There could be no other," replied the girl. "But, papa, he will want his lawyer, and that is his grandfather."

"But how do we know," queried madame, "that either will consent to come? Have they not had enough of Zéphire?"

"I have thought of that," said her son. "Rosalie will telephone the young man——"

"No," said both women in one breath, and madame added:

"You will do that yourself, but you will say: 'My daughter is here and wants to ask you something.' And then—but when will that be?"

"At once—and right here; only, first Ovide."

Monsieur closed the vault, the three left the bank.

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But presently they were back again, having motored down to Ovide's shop and made a full arrangement with him. Now they rang up the Castletons' number.

"No, neither gentleman was in. Mr. Philip might be at the university." But the university said no, he was gone from there; might be at Howard Library. He was. The library had no telephone, but used a neighbor's. "This is Philip Castleton."

"Mr. Cazzleton, this is Mr. Durel; Alphonse, presid'—yes. My daughter——"

"Mr. Castleton, this is Rosalie Durel, at the bank; also 'mère and papa. The bank is closed, everybody gone. Zéphire is across the lake. We want to see you a few moments. You can come? At the bank? Now? By side door?"

She hung up. "He will come at once."

Waiting, the three sat and planned. To which of the three the chief credit belongs for the ingenious design they were presently to reveal to Philip matters not; the first thought of it was Rosalie's. Within a quarter of an hour there came a tap on the side door, and Philip was let in.

"Well, sir," said the banker, "I su'pose you'll be surprise' at us when you know that *one* reason we have ask' you here 'tis to invite you—an' the judge—an' if convenient yo' h-aunt—to go with us this evening ad the theatre. We have already the box."

Rosalie interrupted: "That's not the way to invite you, but before you decline you must hear why you're invited that way."

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Philip smiled. "Do I betray symptoms of declining?"

"My dear sir," monsieur said, "you, even if declining, you wou'n' bit-ray symptom'. But we have to confess we are prop-osing that pleasure as a matter of business."

"Of the bank," said his mother, while—

"Of the grand jury," suggested the daughter.

Philip smiled again, all round. "Is this a riddle?"

"Mr. Cazzleton," said monsieur, "we 'ave juz' find sign' of trouble in thiz bank."

Philip clutched the arms of his chair. "Yes, sir?"

"Yes; maybe true sign', maybe no; but *if* true a part of thad blame is on me. Biccause of that I have to ask you to take me—unofficially—into yo' cuztody."

Philip could only bow, and shift in his chair.

"Biccause, firz' thing, tha'z to examine those account', an' till we fine out something wrong we muz' keep that from the public, so not to make a run on the bank. Also my cashier—*by my request*—he's out of the State, an' if he take al-arm"—hands and shoulders went up.

"When will you have the examination?"

"Commencing at nine to-night."

"While we are at the theatre?"

"While we are su'pose' there; but you an' me, leaving those other' ad the play, we'll be here ad the bank with that examiner, to rim-ain till he's finizh'. But I muz' tell you, that examiner he's black! He's Ovide Landry."

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"That's all right, sir, but are you willing the judge should know all this?"

"We are willing. But yo' h-aunt—I thing maybe she's not compel' to know, eh?"

"Why, ladies, I know my aunt can't come. She's very busy preparing to go away and has a prior engagement."

The ladies were sorry yet very lenient. "But Judge—?" Rosalie began to ask, when her father interrupted.

"And you will make me," he said, "one promiz?"

"I'll have to ask what it is."

"That you will do nothing aggain's Zéphire till we fine out the condition of the bank."

"I promise that. Now may I ask something?"

"At your pleasure."

"The State examiner, when shall you call him in?"

"When my board shall choose."

"And you expect to inform your board——?"

"At ten to-morrow, Sunday, if we fine something bad, same time whiles offering my resignation."

The ladies stirred with new distress. "But Judge Castleton?" inquired Rosalie, for a diversion.

"Probably I can settle that here by telephone," said Philip. He took the receiver. "Judge?" he called; an answer came. Briefly stating the invitation's importance, not its purport, he gave it, waited, frowned. "Oh! . . . Oh! Can't you—? Yes!" and while he waited again he explained that the judge had a conflicting appointment which he was endeavoring to cancel.

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"Tink," said the instrument. "Yes," replied Philip, and all four heard the judge, as if he were but nine inches high, say he "accepted with pleasure."

They rose. "Now, sir," said Philip, "where am I to meet you? At the theatre?"

The banker shook his head. "We are not to separate. We'll sen' the ladies ad home an' lunch together. 'Je ne suis pas prisonnier, mais—' I am in yo' cuztody."

The play that night was one of the choicest of the season. A minute before the curtain rose, in the radiance of a fully lighted auditorium and in view of a fashionable assemblage, the Durels, with the judge, Philip, and one of the Ducatel bank-tellers, entered their box. To the Castletons the whole affair was a strange bit of punctilio, dazzling in its integrity, "very Creole," as the judge said to Philip, yet not without a touch of Creole finesse.

"You see M. Durel has also us in his custody."

"That's all right," Philip replied, and turned to Rosalie.

The judge sat with the ladies. The teller had a choice rear seat. Monsieur confessed a growing "migraine," and when in the darkness of the first act the teller missed him and Philip the headache amply accounted for their absence.

Soon after daylight, while Ovide stayed, monsieur let Philip out at the bank's side door. No need remained for either to hold the other in custody. By telephone a meeting of the board was already called.

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Conditions had been found as bad as any outwitted State inspection had ever failed to detect—worse than they possibly could have been but for a president's misplaced confidence.

Said Philip, alone with the judge at breakfast: "Zéphire, using that teller, has been robbing the bank for years. The first step now is to make his stealings good without letting the facts get beyond the board. It will take all the Durels have got, even if they're allowed time to reduce their realties to cash. They'll save nothing——"

"But honor," said the judge, "honor and loveliness."

"And poor relations," Philip added.

XXIX

HER WOOF ON HIS WARP

MONDAY morning found Zéphire at his desk.

That the board had met on Sunday or that any one had been in the bank since Saturday noon there was no sign save in the president's face. There Zéphire noted a refined haggardness for which an increased cold hardly accounted.

The cashier early heard of the theatre-party from the Ducatel whom it had included, and instantly saw his Biloxi mission in a new yet false light. But Ducatel dwelt so ardently on the physical charms of the leading actress as to leave no time to say or be asked aught regarding Philip or monsieur. Secretly amazed and newly enraged, Zéphire discerned Rosalie's ingenuity, but guessed only a further move to put his rival supplantingly in his place. Her father's haggard look remained a disquieting riddle.

When the cashier went to lunch he had under his coat both his pistol and a cowhide whip. In Canal Street he met Philip, but the elder Castleton was with him, and most grudgingly he let them pass. Then, however, he stopped and followed till they turned into Chartres Street, as if bound for Ovide's shop. Resuming his own way, he perceived that he was himself shad-

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owed by the bank's detective, but felt sure that this was solely to avert his actual assault on Philip.

Lunching alone, he recalled with redoubled anxiety the president's look. For it he must, he must, find something to account! That Alphonse should so far yield to his daughter as to make a public parade of friendliness with the two Castletons in the face of common gossip that one of them was letting himself be branded, on the open street, as a coward and an apostate to his race, could be only for some appalling, compelling reason. It was unbelievable that the purpose should be no more than to repudiate his, Zéphire's, quarrel. There was something else! He began over again to put the fractions of his puzzle together and the first two pieces fitted! Alphonse was short of funds, and the Castletons were "long"; not a mile long, yet long. Rosalie had become a negotiable asset! He started up and hurried back to the bank and his desk.

Meanwhile the two Durel ladies had set out from home for Ovide's shop. The drawn features of monsieur were as hauntingly in their mind as in Zéphire's, and none the less so because they knew its meaning. They had kept it out of their own faces only by a feminine heroism which they called necessity, and mainly for his sake. Hardly conscious of choosing, they took a zig-zag route; a square's length up-town, then as much toward the river, then a square up-town, a square riverward, and so on; at each corner freshly repelled by the surrounding forlornness and decay.

HER WOOF ON HIS WARP

The Vieux Carré seemed to mimic their state of affairs. As they went cautiously over the broken sidewalks of brick, flagstones, and concrete by turn, their murmurous talk, as uneven as their steps, and now in English and now in French, was as light as they could make it and in bright contrast to the load on their hearts. Yet it was of the grand jury.

"To take notiz'," said madame, "of those girl-stealer', tha'z doubtlez all right; they got to be take' notiz' of; but same time—look ad that!"

"That" was a mountain of trash dumped from a private yard into the public thoroughfare, and the invitation meant not to turn and gaze but to see—without being seen to see—the spot and all—or at least half, the unasphalted half—of the region. "Me, if I was that gran' jury, firz thing I would do, I would call notiz' to those street'. I would *compel* attention to that. Mud, by cartload'! Paper, rag', straw, by cartload'!"

"Ah, but sometimes only handcart!"

"An' sometime' two-horse cart. Loose cobble', cartload'! Tin can', broken slate', brickbat', by cartl'—ah!"—the critic swerved from something alive at her feet—"mon Dieu! even those cat' they are too dirty to get out of the way! I thing the good God be thankful if we abolizh firz some dirt an' *then* some wickednezz."

The black woman chuckled. "Hunh! Y'ought to see some o' de nigger streets."

"They are worse?"

"Law', dis is good housekeepin' to some o' dem.

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Momselle, is dat so, dat in some countrie' evem de nigger streets is clean?" She got no reply, cared for none; rarely ventured deeper into politics than this comforting taunt.

Philip and the judge, nearer by than they were supposed to be, and as willing as the Durels to talk most of what troubled them least, found one or two extenuations for the squalor. For generations, in almost every case where the Creole manner of building had given way to newer sorts the newer were so cheaply, clumsily frivolous that no cleanliness could ever redeem them or their surroundings.

"Pity, Phil, your grand jury can't bring architectural ugliness into court."

Philip lightly rejoined that good architecture did not *insure* clean living, physical or moral.

"Yet, the world over," insisted the judge, "wherever the poor man's typical house is ugly, dirt stops and stays."

"You wouldn't call them cause and effect?"

"I'd call them joint effects—of something unworthy in the public mind."

"And then what would the public call you?"

"Oh, you mustn't expect the public to pay wages every Saturday night. Young man"—they had reached the book-shop, and the judge laid a finger on Philip's breast—"mark me! A man *can* tell the public its faults successfully; but strait is the art and few there be that find it."

"Suppose it's an art one doesn't want."

HER WOOF ON HIS WARP

"No well-regulated citizen should be without it."

"Well, then, what's the secret of it?"

"This: Love your public at least twice as hard as you scold it. But be sure you love it; don't just think so."

"The way auntie thinks she loves Browning?" laughed Philip as they entered the book-shop. Miss Castleton, by the way, was to sail early the next morning for the Mediterranean.

By and by Rosalie, madame, and their maid arrived at the shop door. Ovide's wife stood in it. He, she said, was in the rear room so busy with two gentlemen, that she——

"Member' of the board of the bank?"

"Oh, no'm, not o' de boa'd, no'm!"

The startled callers began to draw away.

"Oh, dey won't come out fo' a smart while yit; dey jes' gone in. You as good a right to come in an' wait as——"

"No-no-no-no-no! We'll make some erran' an' rit-urn."

"But, dat away you'll miss Ovide twice over; soon as finish' here he got to go right up to de bank."

"No-no-no!" The pair smiled down and waved off all assurances. "But come, you, a few steps, while still watching the shop, and we'll tell you what to tell Ovide."

At a snail's pace but in hurried speech they told it:

"Those ladies at the college, they promise hands off. And that's the reason they don't know that to

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make trouble for Philomèle right now, would make trouble also for Zéphire, and *that* would expose his trouble with the bank; and *that* would make a run on the bank, and *that* would bring other banks into the dif-fic-ulty, and *that* would produce a panic; and *that* would cause a terrible condition of those poor, both white and black, and maybe that wouldn't stop all over the United States, and perchance might even get us into that awful Eu-ro-pean war; and that's the chief cause that we'd be glad if Ovide would go just a little slow with that complaint till some new devel-*ope*-ment. You understand, that's not to save ourselves—no-o!—and neither we don't want to defeat those ends of justice—ah, non! But we don't want to make ten times as much misery as we extinguish; you understand? And you'll tell Ovide, if he knows any way to keep Zéphire out of that and same time not defeat those ends of justice——”

“Yas'm,” the spectacled wife interrupted, backing toward the shop, “I tell him, an'—eh—anyhow he—he do his bes'.” She smiled kindly, yet in her tone there was a hint of reservation. Euphrosine noted it and stepped forward.

The spectacles halted and Euphrosine, close to them and apart from the ladies, mumbled: “Sisteh, ef you thinks to do young Mr. Cassamun a favor by gitt'n' Zéphire Djurel into dis mix-up you gwine to miss it as wide as de Mas'sippi River. Ef you wants to sarve him an' momselle an' true love all in one lick, you go do what she done tell you.”

HER WOOF ON HIS WARP

For reply the wife, ignoring her adviser, shed on Rosalie a new benevolence and said: "Oh, yas'm, da's all right. I sees how dat kin be done. You kin res' easy 'bout dat, bofe o' you; yas'm." She turned for the shop.

The ladies and their maid moved on down-street, passed under the arcade of the Cabildo, hesitated, then crossed the way and disappeared within the iron gates and among the sunbathed shrubberies of Jackson Square. But outward sunshine only mocked the inner gloom and dismay with which they struggled, and after as brief a circuit as two steeple doves might make on the street pavement they went out where they had come in, and recrossed the way.

In the marble floor of the cathedral, close before two side altars at opposite doors of the transept, are two foot-worn tablets, of which all curious visitors are charged to take note. One marks the last resting-place of Don Andreas Almonaster y Roxas, the other is sacred to the memory of three Phillippe Marigny-Mandevilles. Never mind to-day who they were. There, that afternoon, knelt three worshippers, a dark one on this side, two fair ones on that, who, having done the best they knew for love and righteousness, now turned their backs on this fearful world and cast their yearnings and tremblings on a divine compassion.

Go softly, mere sight-seer. Turn back and seek some remoter exit. Every heart knoweth its own—
Come away.

XXX

A MISTAKE IN BRANDING

AFTER his solitary lunch Zéphire had been back at his desk an hour or so, when he was newly startled.

Laboring to guess why the Castletons should have been going together to the bookman's shop at that busy time of day, and glancing now and then into the bank's rear office, whom should he espy accepting a seat there, *a seat* alone with the president, but Ovide himself. For what he had come the cashier could only, between business interruptions, indignantly, anxiously, wonder and wonder while Ovide sat and sat. White men waited outside, chafed, and went away sour.

At length Ovide departed. Zéphire, in his time, had seen unnumbered clients enter and leave that room and had learned to divine their errands. He was, we say, no craven; but now he felt consternation thump with every pulse as he thought to himself: "Alphonse Durel! Have your negotiating Castletons asked for a show-down? Is it to make good for your mother and daughter that you are borrowing from a nigger? And am I, then, by that show-down, found out?"

The bank closed for the day, and the president "would like to see him." He went in.

"Zéphire, bring me the boxes of my mother and Rosalie."

A MISTAKE IN BRANDING

Sweating, he brought them, and began a clever play of searching himself for their keys. Monsieur cruelly kept the play up. It was quite too much like cat and mouse. "May you not have left them in your room?"

"Yes! I'll go and get them—unless to-morrow will do——?"

"No, get them now. I can wait."

He went out stupefied, paralyzed, suffocated. He might have caught hope in his cousin's readiness to allow him out of sight had he not remembered the detective. At the first corner he stole a side glance back and there the detective came. Oh, that anything might occur, be made to occur, that could delay for a night, an hour, the débâcle!

Had the Castletons a hand in it? Oh, to meet Philip now! Revenge should have her perfect work! And somehow, oh, somehow! there might be salvation in the encounter. A new sweat of desperation stood on his brow. He did not go to his rooms. Giddy, faint, as though he fled from a volcanic eruption, he sought the Carondelet Street office of his partner in cotton adventures. But he never reached it.

The two Castletons were in that street. They had been doing a number of last things for Miss Castleton and now appeared about to part. The judge looked at his watch.

"Bank's closed," he said. "You've got auntie's money? Good. Phil, has Zéphire made you no threat of violence?"

"Why, you're as sudden as a cross-examiner, Judge."

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"Never mind, I reckon I'll stay with you a bit longer."

"Oh, you go on, I'll see you at dinner." Finally they started in contrary directions. Half a square off the judge stood a moment and then retraced his steps.

In the middle of a square Philip had bought an afternoon paper and was just resuming his way when the thing he had dreaded for days, dreaded more than he knew, his crowning humiliation, a street fracas, confronted him. Zéphire Durel, whip in hand uplifted arrestingly, faced him on the sidewalk. In the other hand was his pistol.

Philip leaped forward. The whip cut him squarely across the eyes, but with both hands he wrenched the pistol free, though it fired. He cast it to the ground, throttled his foe, and after a short struggle, crushed him against a wall. At the cut of the whip the street had swarmed with men, but on the pistol's crack they had leaped to cover. The detective ran up, but he and the judge got entangled, and before they could separate, Zéphire's eyes were protruding, his face was blue, legs limp, head bloody, and a rib broken by one of Philip's knees. Only the masonry and his foe's grip held him up. The judge and the officer tore them apart, the crowd closed in. Then hats were restored, the newsboy handed the pistol to the detective, and taxicabs were called.

"Now, judge," Philip bitterly laughed, "what do I look like?"—and the crowd laughed with him.

A MISTAKE IN BRANDING

As the two sped homeward Philip found the whip in his grasp, and a bullet-hole in his sleeve.

"Phil, there's one small comfort; the crowd approves. . . . Your classes have been thin of late, haven't they?"

"Decidedly thin."

"They'll be crowded to-morrow."

Meanwhile the detective had telephoned M. Durel of the incident and was taking Zéphire to his rooms and bed.

Monsieur stood at Zéphire's bedside, alone. In the front room, the room of the antique bookcase, etc., he had talked with the detective, and had sent him on an errand. The day's fatigue had sharpened his haggard look, but its refinement also was intensified. Standing, he laid his delicate hand on one of Zéphire's with a slow, gentle stroke.

Down in the cashier's husky throat something inarticulate rattled. The elder cousin, rather to himself than to the prostrate man, smiled. "You need not pretend," he said, "to be unable to talk. I have nothing to ask you."

"Ignace," whispered Zéphire, meaning Zoppi, the detective; "don't let Ignace bring a doctor."

"My dear fellow, fear not. For what doctor would come? If I were a doctor, Zéphire, I would no more attend you than I would a dog with the mange. What you want is a surgeon, to open a vein. Don't try to get well; you would go straight to the penitentiary. Whereas dying you avoid discharge as a cashier, and

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leave the name of Durel still, on its public side, undefiled. The devotion of our former slave, Ovide, has saved that name."

Zéphire flashed. "You have borrowed," he whispered, "from that nigger?"

"I have borrowed from that nigger. Your help without his would not be enough, nor his without yours. Ignace has gone for Pascal" [the bank's notary]. "You will make over to——"

Zéphire whispered again. "I will leave all I have to Rosalie if you will swear not to give her to—that hound."

The answering smile was benign. "When I promise, it will be to myself, not to you, and above all not that. You will make over to the bank whatever you legally possess. It will lighten your infamy. Ignace and Pascal will attend to that; I go to call another meeting of our board, to consider the election of a new cashier, the old one being at the point of death. I lay this revolver on your beautiful mantelpiece. It still has several loads. Next time I see you I trust it will have at least one less. You know your old rule of business, a very good one, eh? 'Do it now.'"

XXXI

TO DIE OR TO FLY?

ZÉPHIRE knew his hurts were trivial. Keen pains attended certain movements and on one side he could not lie; but a physician on the sidewalk had said that the broken rib was back in place and that after a night's rest, with an arm in a sling, he could return to work. So now he began to plan, not for work, but flight. Ignace, he pondered, was bringing Pascal to enable him to make assignment of his assets to the bank. Very well, after a show of revolt he would make it; given under duress, it would be worthless and his cousin knew that fact so well that to ignore it meant that he, Zéphire, would for reward be allowed to leave the country, and his case be hushed up by the board. Compounding a felony is risky, but, "Skin for skin, what will a board not do for its bank?" In the way lay but one obstacle—Castleton, grand jurymen. If Zéphire knew that sort of reptile, it was just the sort to rise squarely between him and the bank and drive him into open court.

A step creaked on the stair, a knuckle tapped the door, and when he called "Entrez" there entered neither Ignace nor Pascal, but Judge Castleton. He came and stood by the bed.

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Zéphire lay on his back. The two looked long at each other. Then the judge remarked: "My grandson has no idea that I am here."

The cashier loathingly closed his eyelids.

"I am here in the common interest; yours, ours, all."

"All, humph! I know where you think you come in."

"Yes? Then we needn't mention names."

"She'll have not a sou left. And neither Rosalie."

"That's all right."

"What you want with me?"

"To put at your disposal, free, my professional advice. Accepting it, you can probably keep this thing quiet right where it is."

Zéphire was suddenly fierce. "Damn the quiet! Alphonse Durel—he sent you here, eh?"

"No, he merely knows I'm here. I thought you might consider it wise to transfer whatever you have—other than—travelling expenses—to the bank."

The cashier smiled savagely. "Damn the bank, too. All I've got egceb'—humph!—on what condition?"

"Without condition, and also free from duress."

"That is your advice?"

"You haven't asked my advice."

"Well, I h-ask it."

"Then I advise it."

"An" if I rif-use?"

"You know as well as I, maybe better."

"Yes. Jail, criminal court, striped suit, eh?"

"That's your own answer, not mine."

TO DIE OR TO FLY?

"Any'ow they cann' hang me. I will make no will!"

"How about a sale? 'For one dollar and other valuable considerations, the receipt of which is hereby——'?"

Zéphire motioned assent. He knew that if he did this, the quicker he did it the better. At another beckon his visitor pushed a button and the room filled with light. The judge found writing materials and in a short time the whole matter was accomplished.

"No, leave the light," said the cashier as the judge rose to go. Once more alone, he slowly gathered resolve.

By and by he slipped from the bed, crossed the room, returned with the pistol and lay down again. He had long regarded suicide as a matter of course should he be found out. "Pop!"—and without time for one pang of agony the penitentiary, with all its horrors, its long, long death by torture, would be checkmated. "Brave fellow!" the clubs would say, "his faults were on the side of his affections. No hypocrite he, and how generous a spender! Had no church superstitions; will sleep without dreams forever."

But here, now, an open door barred the way—this unlooked-for liberty to fly and live, leaving the secret of his crime an abiding secret behind him. There were havens far roomier and far more interesting than the grave, and his fancy heard a more agreeable encomium in the clubs: "Was it a shortage in the bank? No, the bank's all right; but his splendid pride could not

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endure the humiliation of that street fiasco. Louisiana was too tame for Zéphire."

And so his purpose hung, while suspense forced in upon him the thought, what a faint twitch of one finger-joint there was between tragedy and farce, the terrible and the contemptible. To be or not to be? He had the pluck for either choice. Through several minutes he lay motionless save for an abstracted toying with the weapon where it rested in his palm, against his thigh. Now, however, with eyes closed, he gradually brought it to his temple and held it there, none the less in earnest because his hand was without a tremor. Yet the trigger was untouched, and presently with eyes still closed he let the deadly thing creep back to his side. Soon, however, it returned, this time with alacrity, a finger on the trigger. For another footfall was on the stair, heavy, masculine, imperative. Had he been tricked, and by a Castleton? And was this his last chance to die unshackled and by choice? His lips and eyes closed tighter; no minion of the law should cross his floor and find him alive. There came a touch on the knob, and a familiar voice spoke his name. He slipped the pistol out of sight, still holding it, and said: "Come in."

Swift entered, his partner on the cotton exchange. He dropped a word of pity as he drew near, but then smiled a frank vexation. "Zéphire, what *did* you do it for? You've made a dainty mess, haven't you? Never mind, here's a proposition that will lighten *my* load anyhow."

TO DIE OR TO FLY?

On the pillow Zéphire's head rocked in weary dissent.

"Now, none of that!" snapped his friend. "I'm not asking you what you'd like, I'm telling you what you've got to do and do quick. You've got to sell out your partnership to me under date of a month ago. I'm a law-abiding citizen, running my business for dollars and cents and as undamnably as I—" He ceased and sank to the bed, staring, as Zéphire gasped:

"All gone. Gone! The bank——"

Swift sprang up. "You—you've been swindling your own bank? Hell! Why didn't I see that long ago when I first smelt it? Now your board's got on to it and you've bought their silence at my expense! Well, we'll see! They've got to cough up my share of you or there won't be any silence!"

"Wait!" cried Zéphire, rising painfully on an elbow. "Stop!" But the door slammed and he was once more alone.

Again he pondered. All the mental torture that his partner's rude visit had in degree lifted, fell on him again like a redoubled hurricane. Once more he set the pistol to his temple, but held it there moment after moment while a new realization dawned on him—that his nerve was gone. Then head, hand, and weapon dropped to the pillow, his face turned into it and he writhed and wept like a girl. Now he listened. The procession of callers was not quite ended.

A soft knock, a woman's, reached his ear. He listened on. It came again but he made no sound. The

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visitor tiptoed in. His face was to the wall. With a knee on the bed she leaned over him and spoke a favorite Creole pet name: "Bibi!"

Espying the pistol, still in his clutch, she warily fingered it. "Bibi, it is your Philomèle. I've come to take care of you, dear boy; to take you away out of all this trouble." She touched the pistol, but his grasp on it tightened. "I know, Bibi, what has happened. I was in St. Charles Street, at the ticket-office, when you and Zoppi went by in the taxi." She softly worked a better hold on the pistol. "That Landry wench had warned me of the grand jury and told me to leave town. So I spoke for *two* reservations—for Mexico City, to-morrow morning. Wasn't that right, Bibi?"

The head in the pillow nodded. While she spoke she had gradually pried the weapon from his hold; now she concealed it in her bosom.

XXXII

BILOXI AGAIN

IN his Biloxi cottage M. Durel lay sick in body and soul.

Another president filled his chair at the bank. Monsieur could not let his eyes close without seeing him there, except when, instead, he saw his Esplanade Avenue home posted: "For Sale." His physician had urged a change to some far-away scene, quiet without Biloxi's dulness or the New Orleans newspapers. Physicians, however, rarely furnish funds.

On the third day of his stay, though a mist was driving and cold whitecaps were on the water, madame persuaded him to leave his bed for a window looking seaward. So far so good! And when Sunday came, blue and balmy, he was further lured by Rosalie to walk with her under the live-oaks and cedars on the shore bluffs, and by and by on the white beach, under their fringe of dwarfed pines. There, all at once, in a lonely spot between the highway and the water, he came to a most unwilling halt between two men—the two Castletons.

With much dignity the couples exchanged greetings, the judge promptly explaining that their errand was to monsieur only, and a business matter which they hoped would prove welcome. They begged that the

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walk be not interrupted, and when so invited turned and walked with the Creole pair, Rosalie and the judge leading.

"And your daughter's gone?" asked the girl.

"Yes, off for the Mediterranean and the great East." The judge went into particulars.

Rosalie made a gesture of despair. "I couldn't do that. I would be *bound* to stop some place in that war! Miss Castleton must be of a great imagination and a great benevolence to remember those heathen in Asia while that suffering in Europe is so terrible!"

"Ah," said the judge, "that's what Philip and I were saying, or Philip saying to me, not an hour ago; that his aunt has just the kind of imagination and benevolence to discriminate, habitually and on principle, in favor of the commonly overlooked." He ran on about her. By some delicate indirection he made it plain that she had left the city without hearing the things it would have so pained her to hear. She had not seen the morning paper as she was embarking, and even if she had, the paper had treated the bank gently and the street scuffle without names.

"You will not mind," he interrupted himself to ask, "my harping a bit on my own folks, will you, when I can say pleasant things?"

"Ah! If pleasant to you, to me *like-wise*."

"I was going to speak of Philip."

"Yes? Well? Even Zéphire, I would be glad to hear about—if pleasant to you. He's left the city, I believe, Zéphire, eh? That's a fortunate coincidence

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for every-body. Well, even any result from that difficulty in the street, I would be glad to hear about."

"It's pleasant—to tell. It's altered public sentiment toward Phil greatly. He can't walk half a square without having to accept some jovial, unexplained handshake."

"Because he was willing to fight!" prompted the girl.

"Yes, or rather just as good for a fight as if willing. As to his unlucky theories, you know——"

"Yes, I know. Well, about those?"

"Why, they seem almost forgotten. Nearly any theory, mademoiselle, will be tolerated in a brave man."

"Yes! Ah, yes! If he takes care not to practise them!"

"Oh," said the judge, "preaching or practising, any public would rather have us dauntless and ever so wrong than craven and ever so right."

"Truly! And we women we are just like that public!"

Rosalie quickened her step; a conversation going on behind her, fitfully overheard, began to be embarrassing. Monsieur had opened it with a few fervid sentences telling how, while he was still in his official seat with his resignation before the board, Zéphire's Carondelet Street partner, being let in, had demanded an instant arrangement with them on his own terms and had been firmly refused it, he, Alphonse Durel, being the first to say no. So defied, the man, monsieur had

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gone on to tell, had, in revenge, poured out into the street the secret of Zéphire's crime and flight, and all was over!

"No, not all," Philip put in. "It's just as widely known and told that you assumed far more blame than was fairly yours; that you've covered your cashier's shortages dollar for dollar; that you'd still be in your chair had it not been coveted by one of your board, who, after all, did not get it; and that you retire newly honored, a poor man."

"Poorer, sir, than a priest, an' mother an' daughter the same! Be please' to notiz' that!"

Philip reddened: "We're not overlooking that, sir. Now let me state our errand—which it didn't seem good to do by letter. We, the judge and I, with others, have mentioned you for the presidency of that new bank, you know—around in—yes. It's small, but it's solid, and with the present business outlook and with you at its head——"

Monsieur was giving his head a steady negative shake while in turn he grew red. "An' will you permit me to inquire who *author-ize*' you to mention me for that?"

"Mr. Durel, the conditions of the case authorized us."

The banker lifted his brows, but the young man pressed on:

"You know that this whole exposure has come directly out of our contact with you and your family. It would be as unworthy for us to shut our eyes to

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that fact as if—however blamelessly to either side, you in your motor-car and we in ours——”

Monsieur's elbows went out with palms spread. “We are no longer of the motor-car aristocracy.”

“—You in yours and we in ours,” Philip untactfully persisted, “we had crashed into you and wrecked you.”

As briefly as the sound could be uttered monsieur said, “Ah!” Without loss of dignity his whole manner implied that the excuse was as offensive as the trespass. Then he added the four short words to which he had intended to limit his reply: “Sir, I muz’ dic-line!” But as they came they started a quiver of sick nerves that impelled him to speak on: “Those condition’ of the caze they are likewise *my* egscuze; biccause they have projuze’ such ril-ation’ bitwin uz that there cannot come to me now any favor from one of yo’ name without a price which I cannod allow my-seff even to spick ab-out.”

There it was that Rosalie and the judge turned aside and let the other two pass on.

The cut of Zéphire’s whip across his eyes had not stung Philip worse than did these words. When one must restrain his rage, however, one restrains it. The high-tempered youth even smiled—bitterly—as he said:

“You mean there’s a ‘string’ to that proposition?”

“My dear sir”—they halted—“you cann’ priv-end that.”

“Beg pardon, I can, sir. My—my sentiment I admit. It is, immovable, invincible. But that I

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should string it to an offer of rescue—no, sir, hear me through, if you please—if I don't resent such a thought it's because resentment is not my business here to-day. I'm here staring the fact in the face, that this offer assures you the retention of your family undivided in one home, which, all things considered, I can never again let myself enter. On the other hand, should you reject this offer, you know, and I know, that your daughter will probably seek a livelihood away from home. Now, Mr. Durel, as sure as she does I shall court her as ardently and as perseveringly as she will allow."

The parent attempted a gay gesture. "An' tha'z all?"

"Not quite. I may be Quixotic, sir, or otherwise self-deluded; lovers often are; but we—he yonder and I—proffer you, all three, these amends for coming into your lives so disastrously; it's the best we can do."

"An' you don' call that disaztrouz to you?"

"No, sir, I'm profited! I shan't perish for losing your daughter; I can do her better honor. Come what may, fail what may, I'll *see to it* that I'm better profited to have loved her—to love her yet and go unmated all my days—than not to have known and loved her. I'm done!"

"Mr. Cazzleton——"

"No, there's one thing yet. We're empowered to tell you that if you want time before replying, for reflection, or inquiry, or rest, you can have it."

Monsieur said nothing. They walked again, but

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back toward the cottage. Rosalie and the judge followed. Philip could hear their comments on the surrounding scene: That the sands, the pines, were still odorous from their long sun-bath; that the waters licked the beach as a sated monster might lick one's hand; that out seaward they danced in all the colors of the sun's decline, and that the great sand-keys far beyond, though shining like silver, could be seen only when the eye sought them out.

The backward listener could hear Rosalie best. Possibly she willed it so, though the judge and the view appeared to occupy her whole mind. "Nature!" she said. "One cause that I love nature is that she never cares what you feel like—and then you brace up!"

Her father heard; he looked around on nature.

"You may take a month," said Philip, but still won no reply.

After another minute the banker produced a letter, as if to speak of it, but a bend in the path brought into near view the pretty red-roofed pavilion at the shore end of his wrecked boardwalk. Some one sitting there rose.

"Stay, we are coming!" called monsieur. It was his mother. The five sat down together. He handed her the letter. "Tha'z what I receive' laz' night, but"—he smiled—"I had not then the nerve to show it you."

She read it silently. At the first line tears filled her eyes, but she dried them, bending stubbornly to the

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page. Fresh ones sprang, but she read on as she wiped them away. When the Castletons would have risen she smiled through the drops and put out an imperative hand. "No! rim-ain!"

The letter was short; she must have read it a third time before she folded it, saying through more tears:

"Well—avter all—tha'z good."

Rosalie reached for it. She read it standing, her back to the company, while her father told the Castletons its purport. The home, the Esplanade home, was gone, was sold. But it was well sold, so well that he could now seek that far-off quiet the doctors had urged on him.

"I shall go at ones."

"Not alone!" said the daughter.

"No, you with me; or, I will say, me with you." To the judge he tapped his breast. "For me any plaze will do; but for Rosalie, dit-ermin' on a carreer, an' Paris in thad war, the only Mecca—tha'z *New York*, eh?"

"O-o-oh!" cried madame, "going ad *New York* for quiet!"

"My dear mother, if there is in thad worl' a city capable to make as much uzeless noise as *New Orleans* I promiz' you to kip away from there!"

"Ah-h-h! an' thad climade! in Febwerie!"

"My dear, 'tis not for me there in Febwerie I shudder; 'tis for Rosalie in that all-the-year-roun' zero of the *soul* in thad furnaze-roazted civilization. My only hope 'tis thad the firz' snuff of that will sen' her

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back to Louisiana!" This last remark was to the Castletons.

"Amen," murmured Philip.

"Gen'lemen," said monsieur, "I will thing abboud that offer an' telegraph you—egscuse me a moment——"

A servant from the cottage hovered near; the master stepped away to confer with him. As he returned he noted a small fact, a mere refinement of good faith, which awoke his magnanimity. In this moment of parting—for weeks, months, it might be for years—the lover of Rosalie stood conversing not with her but with madame, the judge with Rosalie. They had already begun to offer their adieus.

"Ah!" said the son and father, "but come a moment in, for a glazz of wine!" and madame echoed the invitation.

The Castletons were full of thanks, but "feared there was hardly time" and went away down the beach road, toward the nearest white post of the coast trolley-cars.

XXXIII

THE SIEGE OF NEW YORK

"A CAREER! Oh! H'mm!"

"Yes, in *New York* to fine how to enter the career of a stage-singer. Naturally my daughter she firz' muz' fine the entranze, eh?"

"Not at all. She must first be so fit that the entrance will come running to find her. If she's not, then her problem isn't how to find the entrance; there ain't any; it's to break in, suffragette fashion, anyhow, anywhere. What fame has the young lady at home, in Frisco?"

"In New Orleans, sir! Well, her wide sozial circle——"

"Doesn't count for a cent. What else?"

"Why, eh"—monsieur told of his daughter's choir services.

"That doesn't count half a cent. Can you sit down, Miss, at that piano, and sing me a song, now? Oh! Fatigued."

(She would as soon have sung in the street, for coppers.)

"Fatigued—h'mm! How hard can you work? Do you know that out of whole hundreds who, like you,

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come here with marvellous voices and beauty, only one or two ever pull through the grinding toil of the thing? Have you ever given as much as one recital, yourself?"

One couldn't swallow everything:

"Sir, my daughter has never been under thad ne-
cezzity!"

The pair met an amazing amount of a certain kindness, but also a certain amount of amazing rudeness.

"How does the young lady stand in your own newspapers?"

"Sir, a young lady of Creole familie, she don't stan' in those newspaper'—ah! unlezz maybe she stoop' so far to those corrup' pragtises of social modernity thad they publizh her photo-graph—queen of carnival ball."

"Oh! Carnival! I'd like to see that just once. But you people—why don't you cut out that pasteboard antique?"

"Cut out? Pasteboard? Cut out—thad carnival?"

"Certainly! Break your toys and grow up! Why, that papier-mâché splendor is a hundred years behind the times. It advertises you as a city to see once overnight instead of a city to live in. At work or at play, a great city ought to be legitimate drama as far as it can be; ought to be its own great self. See? Now, don't take offense where none is meant. First rule of politeness, ain't it?"

"In thiz country, yes—if nod the only! My dear sir, if thad whole polide country want to come at our city a night or day an' go away forever, they can

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come, they can go; but we, papier-mâché an' all, we'll *live* there as we like, the most incomparable city in Ammerica!"

"H'mm, without a doubt! Well, young lady, I don't see anything for you. A stage-singer! How old are you?"

The father sprang to his feet speechless, but the fellow went on poking things into pigeonholes while saying: "Oh, she needn't tell. Patti was a public singer here at seven. Ellen Terry was acting in London at eight. That makes you rather tardy, don't it? Now, if you wanted a *job* I'd say let those people whose yacht you were on last year have you sing in their drawing-rooms, say for the Belgian sufferers or something. There's an inch that may get you an ell, though you've come at the wrong end of the season."

The career-seekers took the suggestion under advisement, but went on seeking the golden spoon. "Where there's a will there's a way," insisted the daughter, but unluckily the father's will was the other way. They found women in careers—of one sort and another, but every such woman seemed to have broken in or climbed over or crept under. "You can do neither, Rose, your gifts forbid!"

Some of the lucky ones were young and handsome, many were Southerners; yet with all their breaking in, climbing, or creeping, luck had never come by assault, only by siege, often years of siege; and none could tell how you do it. They could only assure the fair Creole that she couldn't do her sort of thing their way.

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"Thank God, no!" said monsieur after each interview. A career involved—ah, what not! Unwomanliness? Oh, no! Yet both father and daughter saw that from nine out of ten of the lucky ones there was gone—as an early instalment of the career's price—a bloom which had not yet begun to leave her grandmother.

That beloved lady! That sweet wonder of enduring youth! Her daily letters to Rosalie were from the humble, not to say pinched, dwelling of an up-town Ducatel couple, bowed parents of the bank-teller who, on Zéphire's flight, had been allowed, by bank and grand jury alike, to drop out of employment into oblivion. She wrote of days made strenuous, and thereby relieved of all loneliness, through the pursuit of a scheme hit upon entirely since being left to herself—hit upon not by herself, but laid before her by Ovide through his wife and his sister-in-law Euphrosine.

On leaving for New York monsieur had given madame carte blanche to carry out, under any modifications acceptable to her and the bank, an agreement with it by which the contents of their home were to be sold at auction to realize to the bank the appraisement set on them in his statement of his assets. But hardly had he and Rosalie reached their Mecca when the project which madame knew no better than to call Ovide's was brought to her, showing such an alluring radiance on each and all of so many sides—a Durel side, a bank side, a Ducatel, a grand jury, and an Ovide side, if not others—that she had got it fairly under way in one

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forenoon. And here is how it had come into being and what it had come to be:

In his parental home the well-chastened bank-teller, Ducatel, lay as he had fallen, to speak in figures, his spirit too broken to stir a wing, until Mme. Durel, with that feminine power which lifts so many thousands of the male kind by a word and bids them rise and walk, bade him go "ad the fo'emán of thad gran' jury; tha'z a Mr.—eh—" She tapped her brow in sweet pretense until the teller supplied the name——

"Yes! Cazzleton; an' tell him if his gran' jury let you al-lone you fine some honez' work an' rip-ort to him—to them—every sigs week' or so often as they want!"

"Judge," said Philip that evening, "Ducatel's been to see me." He stated the teller's proposition. "I told him I'd submit it to all concerned; judge, district attorney, jury, bank; that it was no light matter to ask the law's administrators to be extra-legal, but that I believed in it and had been thinking of it myself from day to day."

"I don't doubt you could have said night and day."

Philip's only reply was to stare absently, until he resumed: "I told him his case would be far stronger if he could name some work in which he could at once begin."

"He couldn't, I suppose."

"No-o-o! No! But when I went to see Ovide Landry I gave him a plan to propose in his own

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name, keeping us out of sight as—yes—as before.” (“Before” signified that private transaction which on the day of Zéphire’s downfall had taken these two to Ovide’s rear room and had kept Ovide so long in the bank president’s office.)

The plan, as told to the smiling judge and as submitted next morning to madame by Ovide’s wife and sister-in-law, was to make the teller a dealer in antiques. In the old rue Royale, near enough to the Chartres Street bookman’s place for his supervision, a shop would be rented, stocked with the furniture, books, china, and whatever rich belongings of the Durel home and Zéphire’s rooms were to have gone to auction, and the teller put in charge. For this he was connoisseur enough to qualify; it was through his taste for books, arts, and crafts that he had been drawn into his entanglement with his absconded kinsman.

Wherefore, light-heartedly wrote madame to her dear far-aways, the only auction engaging her activities was bridge, to which their absence had driven her! Small evening card-parties frequently rounded off the busy days and made them, but for the absence of her pilgrims, as happy as any she had ever known. This Rosalie understood better than her father, through a lengthy postscript which she instinctively kept unread to him—had he not problems enough already?—and which told of an unexpected meeting, at one of these dissipations, with Judge Castleton. She chanced to cut him as bridge partner and later had permitted him to walk home with her. This carefully humorous pas-

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sage Rosalie read locked in her hotel room, where tears could flow without shame and themselves take part in the reading and rereading. Where also, without the weariness of drying her eyes, she could write long answers which answered everything without once mentioning a Castleton. Oh, the bitter-sweetness of communing, though with half a continent between, with one who knew all about love—a girl's love—even yet. Even yet!

XXXIV

SIEGE RAISED

THE southbound letters were, of course, much more than bare replies. Their writer told of the drawn face her father betrayed when alone with her, and of his disappointment in hopes that *some* one of these New York financiers whom he had long known by correspondence, their yachting acquaintance of the previous summer, for instance, might on closer contact offer him some New Orleans alliance, some branch work there, better than the presidency of Philip Castleton's infant bank. On this disappointment, she wrote, he was so kind as to lay all the blame of his unrest, but that she knew well it was her own case, from whatever side regarded, that mainly racked him.

However, neither letters home nor from home, nor career-seeking, nor angling for financiers, nor the sights of the great city quite used up the exiles' time. They received much social attention. To a choice circle they were, Rosalie playfully wrote, "a new game." Hostesses who could not secure them for dinner or lunch begged them to breakfast. If a social career could have satisfied them, there it waited with double doors wide open. What flattered monsieur much was the company, not of men whose wives' pearls and diamonds might have bought battleships, but of men of

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the sciences and arts, and men of weight in world politics, who, in spite of his best manœuvring, and with a courtesy satisfactory even to a Creole, drew more out of him than he could from them. If anything flattered him more it was the way every one doted on Rosalie's songs—French, Italian, English, and even Scotch. Her Scotch was "such a fetching Creole Scotch," he overheard.

"And now," the ladies besought her, "won't you sing, as you did last evening before the gentlemen came in,

'What's this dull town to me?'"

No, she would rather not. The gentlemen had come in, this time, and she knew that that song cut her father to the heart. As for herself it would have been rapture to sing it; the nightingale will sing for grief, for love-grief. It was blind chance, and to the father as ugly as blind, that once, while she was still being lauded for an Italian love-rhapsody, a university professor asked him: "Do you know, down there in Tulane, that remarkable young history man, Castleton, Philip Castleton?"

"If I know him, yes; though not as rim-arkable. An' you?"

"I know him only by his writings, but his papers on the national bearing of your Southern problem are the most lucid, high-minded——"

The Creole lifted a hand. "An' wrong-headed. My dear sir, thad young man know' no more w'at he's

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talking ab-out than those anti-vaccinationist'. Yes, my daughter"—for Rosalie had heard—"we muz' go."

"Well," retorted the professor, and she heard again, "you won't have him long; Harvard's calling him."

Next morning the pair found each other very, very weary. "Laz' night," said monsieur, "I heard thad clock strike every hour."

Rosalie's reply itself struck an hour. "Well," she said, "as for me, I'm ready—to go home."

"Bud the home," he demurred, "is gone."

"We'll make another, papa. 'Twill be small, but—likewise is the humming-bird's. And I'll make singing my trade; I'll sing by the job."

He stood dumb, meeting her uplifted smile with a stare of anguish, then sank into a seat and let his face down into his hands. The daughter knelt and laid her head on his. By and by, before either had stirred, she asked:

"You'll arrange that to-day, *cher* papa?"

"Yes. Yes, my Rose."

She longed to be off at once, but they were engaged to dine, and at dinner, bang! they met Murray again, returning from California to Britain. He clung to them through the evening, escorted them to their hotel, and talked on with them there. He had come east by the Southern Pacific route, and in New Orleans had once more seen the Castletons. Philip he described as—"for a man who calls himself well"—in very poor condition. He gave no hint that Ovide had told him Philip's love-story. He did confess that

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through the bookman he knew all the Durels' misfortunes. The antique-shop, he said, was doing a "rrrat-tling business." Now he rejoiced to be told that the headship of the small bank was accepted. Yet as he was going he begged:

"Don't hurry back! Man, you're tired out! Get rested!"

Monsieur said it was for Rosalie he was going, and she said that "*New York*" made him only "the more tired."

"I have it!" cried the Scot in the joy of a sudden deep, intermeddling design. "Come with me, to-morrow, to the rrestfulest spot this side the Atlantic. A mere ferry trip, two days, and you're in the Bermudas, a fountain of youth for a tired head or hearrt!"

The Durels, silently dismayed at the extra outlay, argued that New Orleans was by this time comparatively quiet; both the racing season and the carnival were passed——

"Yes," said the Scot, "just over as I came through. But be the time o' year this or that, for you there's your old ruts to jolt across, or, worse, to drdrop into!"

Monsieur shifted ground and mentioned German cruisers.

"Hoh! Have you seen any wolves in Fifth Avenue lately?"

The pair might have said yes, but Rosalie merely remarked that their tickets south were already bought.

"You can exchange them. I'll do it for you!" With two against one the debate was arduous. The

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Scot drew monsieur to the sidewalk. "Now, I *mean* this!" he there insisted, though even for himself he had never meant it until he re-encountered them. But now he was bent on doing this good turn to a whole cluster of jolly good folk; a turn that, above all, might work the lifelong joy of that fairest thing in the world—if his crippled heart spoke true—a pair of true lovers. It hurt to have to go to his hotel with the question left open; but hardly had he reached his room when his telephone rang.

"Yes . . . You'll go? . . . Mademoi'—good for her!"

He telegraphed a night letter to Philip. "Come, student of knotty questions, spend a week of sea change in the handiest spot this side of any ocean, in which to see how my people bear the white man's burden." He must sail next day, he said, but a steamer followed every few days, and Philip would find him waiting on the dock at Hamilton when the lighter steamed up the harbor.

As Philip, in New Orleans at breakfast, read this message to the judge, the Scot on his starboard deck joined the Durels to point out Sandy Hook. "Ye noted with prrude that Frenchman's gift, Liberty Enlightening the Wurruld? Egad! That's what liberty's for. It's the wurruld's fore wheel. And the hind wheel is like unto it, but bigger, for the hind wheel is Love."

XXXV

ENCHANTED ISLE

AT sea the Creole banker found Murray burden enough for any white man.

The Scot was giddied by an item of the Durels' trouble which he knew better than they. On his way through New Orleans, in a talk with Ovide, he had learned more than he ever could have drawn from either Castleton; more, in fact, than Ovide willingly would have betrayed. For in the midst of the story of how Zéphire's shortages had come to light, and of how M. Durel had made them good chiefly by large borrowings, the Briton divined something.

"Who lent him the bulk o' that?" he demanded, and when Ovide touched his own breast the Scot shook his head.

"Yes," insisted the bookman, "I did that myself."

The cross-examiner clapped his hands on his knees and looked the narrator in the eye. Then, relaxing, he said:

"That's all right. Well done—all round! I understand!"

Now at sea, off Hatteras, the intermeddler, obvious partisan of Philip, began, purely for love's cause, a gentle, covert endeavor to give the Creole political mind a new openness. Whether Philip, should he fol-

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low to the beautiful island, would choose to make it a sociological study the Briton cared little, but he was agog to rub into the father of Rosalie the superiority of certain phases of the island's social order to similar phases in "the States." He extolled its harmony in every civic relation and spent his wildest efforts preaching the abominable gospel of government by peaceable counterplay of rival political parties enjoying equal rights. With wearying frequency he cited the history of Britain's rule at home and abroad and dwelt on her blunders—the many missteps she had had the courage to retrace and pay for—in her struggle to govern and serve, with equity and freedom, the throng of alien races, white and dark, of her far-stretched empire.

The Creole moaned under the load, yet because of Philip, whom neither of them ever once named, but who for that very reason loomed ever before his inner gaze, he could not, himself, put the odious, worn-out theme aside even when the Scot was mercifully silent.

"My dear sir, tha'z the deadest queztion in Ammerica!"

"No, Mr. Durel, it isn't dead, it's merely 'possuming. I say it wi' no vaunting, but wi' drread. Ye may crrack its bones and get never a whimper, yet 'tis but 'possuming. Lorrd! Ye can't *neglect* it to death; the neglect of all America can't kill it. It's in the womb o' the future and bigger than Asia, Africa, and America combined. Ye'll do well to be friendly wi' its friends and treat it kindly while it's young and trractable."

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"My dear sir——"

"Hold on, this is my last word. 'Tisn't dead, I say. It's but lost its place in the line and been sent back to the wurruld's tail-end. Wi' war and a swarrm o' lesser things on yon side, and preparedness and a swarrm o' lesser things on this, it's pitifully out o' fashion; but fashions have an uncanny trrick o' comin' back, and there's a day ahead, whether far or near God only knows, when that question—and they that are out o' fashion wi' it—will come round again, as big and ugly as hoop-skirrts."

Thus the zealot—for love, not politics—bored his victim through and through, yet did not wholly defeat his own design. When the short voyage was done and the fair island spoke for itself, the Creole vision had been quickened if not cleared. But a far larger service to true love had been rendered merely in setting the father and daughter ashore on this small facet of the world.

Wherever nature arrays herself in surpassing beauty she challenges the human heart to show why—for what gain or by what right—it keeps itself to itself. From the moment Rosalie set foot on the magical island—*islands*, for the one is many—she found nature singing and pleading as it sings and pleads in the Song of Solomon.

"Here is Solomon's Song," thought she, "in coral, in cedar." Wherever by hill or vale, by beach or cliff, she wandered to escape the human voice, and often in spite of human voices that could not be escaped, the

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voice of nature cried to every sense its plaint of love; and always that voice—though it never spoke in human tones and oftenest was as noiseless as the little ground-doves that ran two-and-two before her feet in every road and garden-path—was the voice of Philip seeking her out across seven hundred miles of States and seven hundred of ocean.

Yet always, too, another voice spoke, in challenging rejoinder; the voice of her own tenderness, interceding for a heart-weary father, mateless, stripped of power, lacerated in pride, wrecked in fortune, and bereft of home.

One day, as the sun dipped low, the two, far from human contact, sat on the brow of a precipitous sea-beaten cliff, looking out to the ocean's rim, across the marvellous peacock colors which the waters there take above and between innumerable submerged gardens of coral. Here, for the first time since landing, he reverted to their situation.

"Rose," he said abruptly and in French, "I beg you to be more receptive to admirers. In New York I yielded to your proposal that we go back to New Orleans and begin life over again, at the foot of the ladder; but the thought of it is cutting my heart through. I chose to pass a long widowhood bearing its burdens alone; I cannot endure now to lighten them by loading their heavier half on my child. Your dying mother bade me marry again if only to avoid that."

"Dear papa, I wish you would, even now."

"It could not, cannot be. The only one to whom

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my heart might have turned was one whom I had loved in earliest manhood, but who, for others' sake, had married before I married your mother; and that one, when your mother went to heaven, had been there already a year."

Without a stir of surprise the daughter meditatively said: "Since that first mutual loss was a mutual sacrifice to duty I should think you would have found in your heart a very tender place for her son."

"No! Precisely because he, like you, is a living, shining monument of that sacrifice, his treasons to our people are treasons to me—an unpardonable personal offense!"

"Papa, they are meant in good faith, in loyalty."

"That does not better them or excuse him. They are treasons to the people to whom he owes a supreme allegiance; treasons still persisted in——"

"Ah, how are we so sure?"

"By the New York paper I read but yesterday, saying as I read it: 'Thank God he is no son of mine. Please God he never shall be.'"

"It must be as you say," rejoined the girl, with eyes averted and cast down. "For that reason I have felt the more free to ask myself, these last few days, in this fair land so like and unlike our own Louisiana——"

"About those things which he says and writes?"

"Yes, and which we see here in daily practice without any evil that we at home avoid. Are they as base as we think, as dangerous as we fear?"

The father's reply came headlong. "They are, and

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worse! I deny everything this land pretends to show to the contrary. I am firmer than ever in my original opinions, the opinions of my fathers!"

Rosalie made bold to touch his hand. "No, dear papa, like me, you are shaken. That is why you are so fierce."

"I am fierce because a man like that ought never to seek—or touch!—the hand of a Southern woman!"

"That would rule out every man yonder in New York or here in Bermuda to whom you bid me listen."

"Not at all! They are not Louisianians or in Louisiana. If you choose to marry away from home, out of the South, I lay no ban on any suitor's politics. Let his politics be those of his country—of *good society* in his country. For God's sake, don't refuse to marry, altogether! Suppose I should die next year, and grand'mère the year after. Heaven! What would you do?"

"My dear papa, I have long ago thought that out. There is always the cloister, the veil."

He caught her fingers. "And not Philip Castleton?"

She shook her head. "After you are gone—no. Once for all I have dismissed Philip Castleton—not in word, it is true, but in fact. I have as good as said to him: 'Go, find another. Do me that honor; the honor not to let love for one woman drive the perfume of happiness out of a noble life, out of a world's service.'"

"And he has renounced you?"

"Yes. Not in words to me, but in acts to you."

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Let me ask—has he made the slightest use of our distresses to get me from you? Has he not rather planned and worked to keep me with you? You have not told me so but I have eyes.”

“And you approve that? For him to drop you so?”

“He has not lightly dropped me. He has torn himself away. He has made neither too much of love nor too little. Knowing it or not, he has followed your example.”

“My child, not he. He will never follow anything but conviction. What credit lies in that I grant him.”

“Please do not you speak in his praise, papa. My heart is neither flint nor clay. It can only struggle to give up a lover who can love in that fashion. When he has found another—and I believe he will—I may succeed better. But, after all, we are only supposing a dreadful thing that is not going to be. You will live on and on, and beautiful grand’mère is good for twenty-five years yet to come.”

Again that night it was long ere the father could sleep. At dawn he dreamed. There came before him a vision so real, so unfantastic, that when he sprang awake a sense of its actuality so persisted that he rose half up to dispel it. He had seen Philip’s mother.

XXXVI

ENCHANTED VISION

THAT he had seen and not merely dreamed he saw, the waking man was confident because of his proud self-assurance that he was without superstitions.

He did not discredit the supernatural; he accepted even latter-day miracles. He knew, by his earliest catechism, that all above and about him there were angels and that one in particular kept guard over him. But he believed, too, in science, in reason, in the steadfastness of nature's laws, and in no self-operating magic. Not one of those thousand faces of lions, apes, horses, men, and swine, that in these months of brain-rack had beset him meant any more to him than to his physician. They had never uttered a sound. But in this marvellous, undreamlike vision he had had the clear testimony of two senses at once; he had seen, he had heard; saw acts performed, heard rational words. From this experience, moreover, that whole grotesque mob of silent, stone-gray visages was totally absent.

Philip's mother had appeared in the bloom of her girlhood, though beside her stood her son in adult breadth and stature. For, as something had mutely told him at the moment, in heaven—as our case may be—we grow on, or grow back, to youth's perfect day and there abide. The dreamer, as it seemed, with

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Rosalie at his side, had been strolling along a bit of white coral sand-beach between the cliff where they had sat and conversed in the afternoon, and a part of the sea where the waters boiled and lashed over low jagged rocks. They had paused to look into the golden haze of the ocean sunset, when suddenly, in clear outline and an amazing show of reality, Philip's mother, and then Philip, advancing a single step from her side, were there.

They seemed not to have arrived but to materialize on the spot from the sunset haze. At the same time a voice, close by, yet not on one side or another but appearing to originate in and from the whole surrounding air, spoke the one word, "Compensation." Awed, thrilled, the father had barely found time to say to the daughter, "This is no dream," when the word, this time far overhead, was repeated, followed by two others—"At last!"

If this recital anywhere betrays the whimsicalities of a dream the fault is in the telling. The mother and son were hardly five paces away. Philip stood on the boiling rocks—she beyond him on the yeasting sea—as though these were footings as convenient and usual as the turfed crown of the bluff above. So standing, she presently began to sway in an exalted rhythm as of a sacerdotal dance. And now she reached and took one hand of her son while he extended his other to Rosalie, who, leaning at the sands' outer edge and clinging to her father's hold at arm's length, stretched her free hand out over the water for Philip's. Nothing

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in routine life could have seemed more actual. As hands touched, the mother called; not in that earlier, incorporeal voice, but in one most sweetly human and familiar and incalculably more real for being out of the rhythm: "Make her mine! Mine! Make both thine, and each one ours!"

Its hearer awoke in a tremor of realization. When he sprang to his elbow the golden light that filled his broad window was that of a rising sun, and he left the bed and dressed. In a day of better poise he might have explained away the experience as coming not to him but from him. Now he could not. That first voice, by which it had been heralded, could be nothing but the call of his guardian angel. The speaking presence of his first beloved was too holy to be reasoned off into mere reverberations of haunting cares and incidents of the previous day.

He walked out into the beautiful white highway that rims the harbor, more than usually willing to meet the burdensome Scot. It had suited both the Durels quite as well as Murray for the latter to put up at a leading hotel of the island's small capital while they went to a quiet inn on the opposite, the "Paget," side of the bay. For more than two days, now, they had not seen him; since the latest arrival, that is, of the New York steamer, on which he had more than half expected a friend whom he would have to show about and present to the governor-general, as he had already done them.

This morning, at the first turn of the winding road,

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the risen dreamer saw his fellow tourist coming round the next one ahead. In Bermuda every one goes on the bicycle, and the Scot was cycling, but he promptly dropped to his feet and soon the two were walking back toward the Creole's inn together, the cyclist pushing his wheel. Following his inquiry as to monsieur's night's rest the wheelman found himself required to answer a personal question: Had he ever seen an undoubted vision as distinguished from the vagaries of an ordinary dream?

His reply was adroit. While he was far too gross, he said, for that sort of thing, he believed some were not and that monsieur was emphatically of their kind.

"Well, if tha'z the way you billieve, I muz' tell you something. You'll egscuse me, putting that on you? There is nobody else an' any'ow I thing maybe you have been tol' a good deal abboud me, eh?"

"Right or wrong, I've guessed a lot."

"Well, I muz' tell you." The Creole told his story; not the dream alone but the whole history that fore-ran it and which needed to be known in order to appreciate the vision in its full poetic and convincing power.

When at its close he waved and dropped both hands his companion made instant reply, hurried by that same zeal in the cause of love which had inspired him to lure the Creole to the island. "Mr. Durel, it's no for a Hieland Scot to doubt the second sight! The mother of Philip Castleton, etherealized, has shown her actual self to you as mayhap she cannot to any

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other mortal. I make no doubt that they in her world are at times given a power by which she's first prompted in you a dream and then used the dream to give a splendor of emphasis to her presence and to the prayer she makes you."

"Tha'z yo' thought?"

"It's my conviction, sir! The most you saw was pure dream; the vision was a wee bit in its centre, like the seed in the thistle-down. D'you mark, that of the three—she, her son, and your daughter—only she spoke?"

"An' in that you find a meaning?"

"I find a fact; this: that the other two were but phantoms of her creation. She alone was a real presence—in the spiritual body. Man, how tremendous must be that love, or pain, or both, that brings her holy soul back from paradise after all these years!"

"What would you do? You would grant that prayer?"

The Scot hoped he saw victory but would not be hasty. "I'd do nothing—yet," he said. "Man! Her prayer changes not a single fact of the case. The case is just where it was before the vision."

"My dear sir, no!" began monsieur. "That prayer change' every—" But his friend chose to be deaf.

"The case is just where it was and you don't even yet know all the facts. Not that I know any that would alter your mind——"

"What is that fact I am ignorant?"

"A fact no one would ever have told me if I hadn't

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first guessed it; a thing a' those Castletons have tried their best to hide——”

“By what right do they dare to hide any——”

“Man, by a divine right! From you, from all, but, clearrest of all, from your daughter. For if she knew it she wouldn't have Phil Castleton though you threw him at her.”

“I dimmand that you tell me that!”

“I'll do it when I have your word of honor that you'll not tell her or any one who might tell her.”

“My frien', she woul'n' have him any'ow. You don' know they 'ave already rinnounz' each other?”

“Pooh! You must pledge me not to tell her.”

“All right. I give you my word of honor.”

“You won't even let her know she doesn't know all?”

“I promiz' that also.”

“Very good. Mind, I'm taking rrisks. It may play the devil for me to tell, but—well—it may help interrpret the vision. For I know the pain it's cost both you and her that's in heaven, for you to have saved your business honor by—well, flatly—by borrowing from your wife's father's nigger— Oh, now, keep cool and I'll tell you good news. You did not. You didn't do what you thought you were doing. Every dollar Landry lent you came from the Castletons. It's good you wanted no more; 'twas all they had.”

M. Durel was overwhelmed. He sank to a seat on a low wall and gazed across the harbor and its islands.

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At length he spoke again: "An' you tell me that for my comfort?"

"I tell it for what it's worth. Here comes mademoiselle. I'll see you later."

XXXVII

TRUE FLESH AND BLOOD

SHUNNING all frequented ways, for three sunsets in succession the father and daughter returned to that cliff and beach where the ocean boiled over the rocks.

The scene was an alluring one; for its own sake, to go there was easier than to stay away. Yet it was not for its own sake they went. There, each time, with daughterly indulgence and a growing fear that his strength was failing she heard him recount the first half of his dream, describing its apparitions but not their movements, and mentioning neither words nor voices. That he did not tell the whole matter was plain, but she would not tempt him on; sought rather to divert his thoughts.

But they would not be diverted. He would not have it so. Whether the experience was dream alone or dream and reality blended, he said, could be decided only by invoking its return. If it could be tempted back he would know it as a true visitation from the spirit world. On their way to the spot for the third time, he confessed, when plied, that the strain was telling sadly on "these nerves," and he promised that if this visit proved fruitless it should

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be the last. "But that is on one condition," he said, "that for a few minutes—ten—fifteen—you will leave me there alone. If she wants to come and cannot it is because of your presence."

So when he sat down on the tumbled rocks, well back, where the cliff's foot was dry, to await the sinking of the vast crimson ball on the sea's rim, she idled away from him amid the sea-grape, sea-lavender, and other things, higher and lower, that covered the wind-heaped sands. A few steps aside, at a corner of the cliff which would have put her out of view, she almost reversed her steps on a footpath that wound up the steep's front in a breast-high ambush of wild growth curious in form and fruit.

Half-way up, the angle of ascent persisting, a yard or so of the path allowed scant foot-room through a fissure in the soft coral rock and revealed another front of the bluff. Here for a brief space she paused to look seaward upon the uppermost crimson rim of the departing sun and then, moving on, turned the cliff's angle. Naturally, as she did so, her glance rose to the steep's cedar-crowned top and instantly she recoiled, gazing and trembling. Up there, at the height's edge, looking far out on sky and ocean, as she had just done, and lighted from head to foot by the twilight glow, stood Philip Castleton.

No faintest sign did he betray of seeking, expecting, or desiring any human presence, at least ashore, and after a second or two, with gaze unaltered, he stepped backward and was lost among the cedars. She faced

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about, hurried down the path, and soon was at her father's side.

"Have you seen anything?" she asked.

"Nothing. My daughter, your hands are ice! What has happened to you?"

"Nothing—out of the natural—I hope. Let us go, we have omitted to bring a lantern."

"My child! You have yourself seen her!"

"Worse, papa. I have seen her son."

"My God! He spoke? He saw you?"

"No, he was looking away out to sea."

"For her!"

"I know not, but certainly not for us."

"Rosalie, my poor child, you have but dreamed."

"Hoh!"

"My child, I believe that man is in New Orleans, alive and well."

"No, dear papa, you believe that if he is in New Orleans he is there only in the lifeless clay, and that if he is alive he is here. Let us go."

They climbed to the high ground and by and by were in one of those narrow, rugged footways, "tribe-roads," that are frequently deep-sunken in the island's foundation rocks, their perpendicular sides overhung above by interlacing boughs. Here they were clambering steeply upward in the dusk, with barely room to go abreast, when, on reaching a more level part between the walls of two ancient grove-gardens, another rise, just beyond, showed—facing from them against a vertical streak of sky and no sooner seen than veiled

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again in a gloom of foliage—the slow-stepping figure of a man, the same that Rosalie had seen under the cedars of the ocean cliff.

With an arresting gesture to her the father, as well as he could stumble up the rocky path, hastened forward. Haltingly, tremblingly, she followed; but when by and by she found herself on a level highroad and between the open gates of three umbrageous estates, nothing moved to tell her where to look for either vanished form. Soon, however, her father rejoined her. His touch was as cold as hers.

“Come,” he said, “let us go indoors.”

For some distance they went silently, but then his speech was abrupt. “My soul!” he cried. “It is his ghost looking for her; her with her grief, he with his!”

“No, he is still in this life.”

“Then he is looking for us! Else by what chance in ten thousand is he just now in this part of this island?”

“By a chance, papa, less than one in ten thousand, yet by chance. You’ll have that proved to-night in the most commonplace way—by telephone.”

“Ah, telephone! Can even wireless inform me how he vanished between those three gates, like a blown-out candle?”

“Yes, he went one way and you another, that is all.”

At their inn the pair found the dining-room full and the region of the telephone empty. Monsieur called up the Scot’s hotel and was answered. “I wizh,” he said, “to speak with Mr. Philip Cazzleton. Phil—

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yes." He waited. Rosalie, at his side, shook visibly. The answer came; she heard it.

"He's not in just now, sir. He's dining over in Paget."

She averted her face and sank, all but fell, into a chair. Monsieur hung up the receiver. "Murray has done this," he said, "he's wire' thad young man to come!"

"Yes, without telling him we are here."

"How do you know that?"

"If he knew we were here he would never have come!"

Each for the other's sake they went in to the evening meal. But soon they left the inn, unequal to social encounters and too restless to find comfort in set pastimes. Out on the broad coral-paved highway as smooth as a courtyard the night was wonderful. Close on the road's inland side loomed the steep hills, clad with groves of fiddlewood and cedar, avenues of palm and aloe, bamboo and casuarina, and gardens rife with lilies and roses, behind hedges of bignonia and hibiscus and low walls of coral sandstone. Below them on the outer side slept the harbor, its ripples and wavelets tipped with phosphorescence. On the opposite shore the little city's lights, reflected in the water's margins, swarmed up the loftiest hillside till a few at the top mingled with the northern stars.

These were the things that could speak to the father's and daughter's minds. Here the grossest intrusion was no more than the silent passage of an occasional

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bicycle as it put them for a moment in the glare of its lamp. The surpassing beauty and peace of the scene calmed them, and long after a tower clock beyond the harbor had tolled ten, and their steps, though slow, had wearied them, they still breathed the solace of the open sky. They were resting half seated on a bit of low retaining wall next the water, where the road, at an abrupt turn, was on that side built out against the wall and on the other was cut into the face of a hill. Their infrequent remarks were quite detached from the thoughts that most haunted them, but after a time Rosalie ventured so near them as to say:

"Papa, when you believed that was a ghost we saw, did you think also of—of Zéphire?"

"Ah!" said the father evasively, "Zéphire is in Mexico; a general, I am told—of fifty men. May he never return!"

A long silence followed. Then, "It may be," murmured the same speaker, "that we shall see our ghost again to-night; he is afoot, you know, and this is Paget."

"Papa, do you want to see him to-night?"

"Not in this fashion, waylaying him in the King's highroad. Let us go back to the inn." The girl slipped from the wall, but then stood very still. From a few yards up the road on its inner edge came a sound of some one approaching; some one walking, his tread barely audible, who, like this pair, was without a lantern. The shadow of the hill quite hid his form, and as a bicycle's light, rounding the cliff, put father and

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daughter exactly in its centre the footfall stopped short. Then, as the turning lamp's circle of light left them it shone full upon Philip Castleton. His dazzled eyes still showed amazement, but before the light could pass the amazement had changed to that intrepidity of gaze—best known to Zéphire—which so graced those eyes in extreme moments.

“Mr.—why—why, Mr. Durel!” The lamp was gone, the two men were meeting in the middle of the snow-white road, under a flood of moonlight. “Why—” He tried to continue, but broke down with a laugh.

XXXVIII

LOVER AND DREAMER

MONSIEUR'S unsmiling rejoinder had been polished and sharpened for the encounter. "You di'n' know I was there, in Bermuda?"

"Not till that light fell on you. I didn't dream it!"

"Dream" was the happiest word the youth could have spoken. The Creole's brow showed a kindliness new to Philip. "Well," he responded, "any'ow—" His hand swung forward. Philip pressed it. "Rosalie," its owner said, "'tis our frien' Mr. Cazzleton."

Her hand throbbed a moment in Philip's. "Like us," she said, "you are here for rest, I suppose?"

That purpose he disclaimed and when monsieur mentioned the extra burden of grand-jury work—"Not burden enough to be called work," he said, "and anyhow, last week, first of March, our term ended. There's a new grand jury. No, I'm here for study; for a closer view of certain experiments in public matters about which we at home need to know all we can learn. That's why I've just been dining with some of the island's leading men."

Monsieur let out a faint "humph." Could they never take, these two, a step together without stepping on that thorn? The three moved toward the inn, monsieur silent, Rosalie plying the youth with in-

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quiries, first about his far-wandering aunt and the judge, and then as to social New Orleans in general. He soon saw that the brave plan to capitalize her talents in New York had been dashed to bits on its pavements, and was glad that she gave no chance to ask questions, since he could have offered no regrets.

At the inn door she spoke a prompt good night. Not so her father. "You are walking entirely arround into Hamilton?" he inquired. "If you please I'll go halv-way with you. Rosalie, you'll not wait up for me."

"Ah!" she cried, "and you'll talk all night—about that—war!" "War" meant "vision."

She drew him aside and in two or three whispered words, without argument, repeated her warning literally. How many things there are which one cannot explain to a father! In a maiden's diplomacy with fate—her heart's fate—there may come a time when she can no longer dictate ideal terms but must take what offers. To Rosalie, however, that time had not come and no hint of that vision must let it seem to have come. The lover's suit was withdrawn! He had raised his siege! Not she nor her father, but fate alone, some new turn of fate, must run up the white flag to bring back the withdrawn besieger. All this harrowing argument she kept unwhispered, trusting it to a father's love and wisdom, and with another blithe good night went in.

Walking beside the youth who had been one of the apparitions of his dream monsieur found his mind so

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flooded with that experience that he remained silent. Yet he walked on, impelled by a growing power in that prayer brought to him from the spirit world. And by another impulse as well: a sense of imperious obligation imposed by the astounding self-sacrifice the two Castletons had made to save *his* honor for the sake of his mother and daughter. For days he had vainly striven to impute to them one or another absurd hope of recompense. Intellectually he could not help but recognize the self-denial, yet emotionally he could not force himself to realize it. It benumbed his imagination. He could more easily accept the reality of that amazing dream than of this quiet fact. As long as its author had seemed to be Ovide it had been credible; Ovide was—in effect—of a sort—a Durel. But these two, and in particular the younger, this renounced and renouncing lover—how could it be? Such *form* of self-effacement, masculine self-effacement, he had never seen, heard of, read of, in all mankind's love-story. What to do with its insufferable weight he could not contrive. Gratitude lifted not an ounce of it. Not one red drop of gratitude could he find in his heart. Honor itself forbade gratitude; for without a change of front, which this present strait made impossible, gratitude was pure mockery. So he walked mute until Philip thought it only true deference to speak.

"I wasn't compelled to come to Bermuda," he said. "I could have turned back at Princeton."

"I hear' in *New York* you are called to Harvard."

"No. However that report got out, it's wrong."

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They did fancy they wanted me at Princeton, but I'm not going."

"Ah! You should go. Ad Prinztion, so cloze bitwin Washington and *New York*, tha'z to be in the big worl', an' tha'z w'at you love, that big worl', is it not?"

"Mr. Durel, I love New Orleans."

Monsieur replied inquiringly, as if that were news to him. "Yes? For w'at you love her?"

"For what she is; for what she is to be, and for whatever I can do to that end."

"Yes? With all her fault', as they say, you——?"

"Yes, sir! Yes! I love my mother-city faithfully enough to see her faults—I'd rather call them ailments—and to want to help cure them—as I couldn't help from a distance. I've never said she had more of them than the big world. Mr. Durel, if I ever get to where the big world's faults are my first business—as they are some men's—I'm certainly not there now. That's the reason—at least that's one reason—I can't go to Princeton—or anywhere else—yet!"

"Same like—su'posing Clevelan', Buffallo, Minneapolis, was yo' mother-city—you should say——"

"No, sir. No! . . . No! . . . No! New Orleans isn't just *my* mother-city, or yours and mine, she's *a* mother-city—metro, mother, polis, city; the capital of a distinct—more or less distinct—civilization."

"Of—of Dixie, I su'pose?"

"Yes, and that's why to say I love New Orleans is a lot bigger than for any such as I to say, I love Cleveland, or Buffalo, or Minneapolis, though they may all

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be greater in their way. To love Dixie's capital joins me to the whole big world even in the matter of faults; for there isn't a shortcoming in Dixie that isn't so condoned and shared by the rest of the nation as to be the whole nation's shortcoming in the eyes of the big world."

"Capital of a civilization," monsieur mused aloud.

"Yes— Oh, that's her greatness, sir! not the numbers of her population, or the tonnage in her harbor, or the size of her bank clearings, or how many ten thousand strangers she can cram into Canal Street on Mardi Gras. They could all be thrice what they are and she still be a village if she chooses—chooses to forget her splendid spiritual responsibilities to all Dixie and to the big world."

The mention of Mardi Gras recalled to monsieur that insolent criticism of it thrown at him in New York. "You billieve," he asked, "she *for-get*' those rizponsibbleties whiles the Carnival?"

Philip tossed an arm. "Ah, that tawdry lunacy! She's just had it again. I've spent half this evening laboring to excuse it to three war-vexed Englishmen and a Frenchman."

"Humph! . . . humph! While same time you'd like to cud that out, eh? Yo' city's greatez' event of the year?"

"Oh, if we could! Wouldn't you? Mr. Durel, maybe I can't see it nearly as small to-night as I ought; last week's glare of it is in my eyes yet. But when a great modern city, capital of a civilization,

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makes that organized old puerility—which is neither reality nor good dream-stuff, celebrates no achievement, initiates no enterprise, presents no contest of strength or skill, and offers no illustration worth saving overnight of any art, literature, or other refinement—makes that, I say, its greatest event of the year, the sooner she cuts it out the better—the happier for her—and Dixie.”

“Mon Dieu!” The Creole stopped in the road. In all his dreaming he had never seen a son of New Orleans strike his mother, mother-city, so ruffianly a blow. Yet now he resumed his way: “You said that to those men there?”

“Not a word of it! I wouldn’t say it even to you if we didn’t both, in our different ways, love New Orleans. But now, see; if one of these islanders, hearing us call New Orleans the capital of a certain proud offshoot of civilization fondly known as Dixie, should ask us what features she can show as exponents justifying the offshoot, could we name our Carnival week? I couldn’t. I’d as soon point them to our management of the race question, which every difference in their management of it here condemns.”

Again the Creole halted, and but for his dream, never out of mind, would have turned and moved away. Instead, he once more walked on, asking: “Mr. Cazzleton, w’y do you drag me aggain into thad subjec’, here, to-night?”

Philip let out an abashed laugh. “I won’t! I won’t! I beg your pardon. But misery loves company, and

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that subject has stuck its nose up to mine every hour that I've been in this island. I shan't mention it again!"

"Well, me, I rig-ret to 'ave mention' thad Carnival. But same time, ad home yonder, you know, they'll tell you how thad pay' prettie well, thad Carnival."

"Yes, in dollars; and I've no contempt for dollars—worthily got. But it pays only in the dollar of the moment. It reaps the dollars and loses what they're for; loses in civilization—for New Orleans—for all Dixie. Why, sir, imagine half that yearly flood of outlay being put into the things that truly refine and glorify a city; that make it a splendid instrument for a modern civilization to strike its chords on."

Monsieur bristled again. "W'at city does that?"

And again Philip laughed. "None that I know of. But if I knew of seven I'd stay in New Orleans."

"You thing New Orleans would diz-ire you to stay?"

Once more the laugh. "Mr. Durel, when you were a boy did you never wonder if your father wouldn't be glad to be rid of you? And yet you didn't run away. I don't ask if I'm wanted. I can't afford it. I stay."

"Cann' afford that in dollars?" asked monsieur, pained.

"Neither in dollars nor in spirit," was the light reply.

The father of Rosalie saw straight into the lover's heart just where the lover fancied himself best hid and was best hid from himself. "Love rarely sees its own

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shadow," thought monsieur, charitably, and while he did so Philip's self-perception cleared.

"Mr. Durel," he began, but then walked on in silence.

"Yes, Mr. Cazzleton?"

"You're mighty patient with me, sir."

"Yes? Well—yes, I thing so," said the Creole, with a glance to the youth, whose smile was so winning that monsieur, himself smiling, wondered why he ever should have been impatient.

"Also," he added, "I'm well please' that we've talk' aggain on those public queztion', biccuse thad show' the both of uz how I'm patien' with you. An' likewise I thing you, you've had patienz' with me. An' I thing now we are truly frien'. 'Tis that what I'm walking with you to say. You see? Biccuse sinz' we 'ave now bitwin uz a so clear un'erstan'ing—not abboud those politic'—we'll never have *that* kind—but——"

"I know; the other thing. And that's all right."

"Yes, an' by that un'erstan'ing we 'ave no longer—bitwin *any* Cazzleton an' *any* Durel—the smallez' necezzity to rim-ain appart any mo' than to meet together."

"That's fair, sir. You're generous."

"An' so tha'z not by a necezzity that I make you the inquiry, W'at you prop-ose to do to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? I—I'm not quite committed to anything."

"Ah? I thought you are always commit' to something. Well, to-morrow, neither me. An' tha'z al-

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ways the safez' way: 'Keep in thad mi'l' of the road!' You muz' egsplain that Ammericanism to yo' frien' Murray."

"Mr. Murray did want me to go with him to-morrow to see the undersea gardens."

"An' here he's coming now; looking for you; but looking where I thing you have seldom the precaution to be foun'—in thad mi'l' of the road, eh?"

XXXIX

GARDENS UNDER THE SEA

NEXT morning the Creoles, at their inn, breakfasted together in a veranda that overlooked, almost overhung, the sunny harbor studded with verdant, rocky islets.

In the smallest hour of the night Rosalie had heard her father return to his room; yet now in the eyes of both there was a refreshed brightness, and on his brow a better calm than had been there for many a day.

Their talk ran lightly, now on things in sight, now on trifles remembered in their dear home city. They felt no impulse to mention the previous evening or even to rest their glances on each other; the wide scene was beautifully peaceful, and to Louisianians there was an inspiration of more than mere novelty in a watery landscape built on rock. "A landscape," said Rosalie, "with an anatomy!"

Down in a distant turn of the bay a war-ship or two rode at anchor, another rested in dry-dock; but up at the town's front as many merchant steamers were busy, and everywhere pleasure-boats of faultless line and towering spread of wing glided near and far and near again to lure to a perfect day on the water. Directly across the harbor a certain big hotel seemed to stand higher, spread wider, above the town's white

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roofs than yesterday, as if it had drawn nearer in the night.

But that was only Rosalie's unspoken fancy, not monsieur's. He dropped into English. "That li'l thing over yonder, with steam up, at right of the hotel an' of the ferry pier—is that not the boat that take' passenger' every fine day out paz' the harbor to see the marvel of those coral reef' through those glazz bottom'?"

She said it was and that it always touched at the inn.

"Then w'y we 'ave never make thad trip?"

"Ah, why! When every day I'm begging you!"

"But always you prit-en' tha'z for yo' hown pleasure!"

"Only because you prefer my pleasure to yours!"

"Then, if 'tis fo' me, we'll go thiz morning!"

He rose. The boat blew her whistle; they saw its white plume, then heard its note; but Rosalie kept her seat.

"Ah, to-day, papa, I think we'll have some rain."

"Ridiculouz!"

"But I think, outside there, we'll find it rough."

"No, that w'izzle, tha'z the sign 'twill be tranquil."

"Ah, but that crowd! Peter and John!"

"There will be none, we are juz' halve bitwin two steamer day'. See, she is leaving. She's coming. I'll sen' for some wrap'." A servant was beckoned. The little steamer had begun to cross among the swift pleasure-boats as among a flock of gulls.

Yet Rosalie still kept her seat. "I think 'twill be

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better, papa, if we take this afternoon, alone, one of those sailboats and make a little turn just inside, round about those lovely islands."

"Ah! An' yezterday you say for uz that coz' too much!"

One of the sailboats, which twice in mid-harbor had encircled the steamer, now swept by her again and came near. Two passengers, men, stood in her well. The girl rose up. The two men were Murray and Philip; they saluted. Their craft touched the inn's small landing-pier and held fast, and the unsmiling Briton spoke: "If you please, this ship is bound for Neptune's gardens. But she's in distress; terribly overprovisioned; must have two more consumers or perrish. Come, you said lawst night you had no engagement."

Monsieur ruefully spread his palms. "Yes, but tha'z impossible! Sinz' half an hour I'm begging Rosalie to make that *same* trip—on that stimmer. But she's af-raid! Of the rain, the win', thad crowd——"

"Ah, papa! Ah-h, papa! How can you make such a mistake? My only cause of hesitation is suspecting you to *pretend* you want to go because every day I'm begging you! I'll be delighted!"

When, down the bay, among those ships of war, the sailboat once more skimmed by the excursion-steamer, four passengers, those four, sat under her towering sail and answered pleasantly the wavings of Peter and John.

If ever a cluster of hills, vales, islets, waters, and

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undersea gardens was pre-eminently designed for the special tillage of love, such a one was Bermuda that day. And love took the tillage, for joy of it, not for need, while Rosalie, on the Scot's strenuous instigation and in splendid renouncement of the gorgeous scene, sang over the marvellous waters:

“Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a paradise
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.”

They found time a-plenty for as much conversation in quartet—on social and civil New Orleans and New York in contrast, for example—as the finest instinct for decorum could prompt, before they humored the stronger impulse to drop into pairs, the juniors forward, the elders aft. Found time for barcaroles, canzonets, serenades. Found miles of waters to be flashed, glided, bounded over, waters of astounding transparency and loveliness and diversity of hue, before the choicest undersea corals were arrived over and the boat folded her great wings and drifted passively in the breezy, drenching sunlight; glorious miles, before the “submarine cameras,” as Rosalie and Philip named the glass-bottomed boxes, were brought out, and they, best content with one, bent over it and shared together every rapture that miraculous beauty can inspire in two spirits consumingly aware of each other yet forbidden to sound the golden note that hung on their heartstrings.

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In time the sails rose and spread again, the helm came down, eyes returned to the upper world, and ecstasy reposed, a tired butterfly. Behind the great sail the two seniors discussed the transatlantic war—armies, fleets, gold-shipments, loans, neutralities, and international law.

Forward the juniors talked of other things near and far, Bermudian, Louisianian. Their one necessity was to keep speech going. Only silence might not be. One appreciable interval between remarks, a single meeting of glances in the interval, and their pledges to monsieur and to each one's own soul would have been but broken pitchers. The peril was constant even when their babble kept the averting charm potent.

For instance: While Philip called attention to the countless purple shadows everywhere on the waters, marking the leagues of hidden reefs that encircled the island and made her, the island, hopelessly inaccessible to any adventurer from whom she withheld her own welcoming guidance, he could not put away the thought that Rosalie was such an island to him and, right there, half-facing him, was herself half-blinded by that glaring fact.

Or again for instance: When Rosalie shifted the scene to the city they loved best, adorned its most preferred drawing-rooms with Creole and American fathers, matrons, beaux, and demoiselles in the varied activities of chandelier light and evening dress, and asked the latest quotations of its social market, he could answer all other queries with better directness

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than those about madame and the judge. Somehow that pair seemed to have become so definitely a part of this pair's case, or else a complete case of their own, or both at once, that for these two to talk of them—here alone, with their own plight frowning over them, and the mermaids' gardens beckoning beneath and all around—was, so to speak, to lean too far out of the boat.

Of course the lover's evasions worked their own defeat. Without an exterior sign from Rosalie he knew that she saw through them all, saw and had long seen; and as they talked on of twenty matters Bermudian and Orleanian, they could think of but one—that heart matter in New Orleans; of its significance to themselves here, to monsieur, and to the half-forgotten aunt. At first it shed promise, a rainbow light. It was very, very beautiful for those two at home, robbed of each other in a far-gone past, to come even now spiritually into each other's possession; beautiful as a dream to Rosalie, and much like one, the relation being so exclusively spiritual, so wholly intangible, as she still assumed it to be and to be destined to remain.

But all the more the idle conversation had to be kept going. Now it hovered over things in sight, now swept once more across seas to circle round the new antique-shop.

"No, since the Carnival its business was dwindling!"

Thence the talk flitted to the missionary college and the Holdens. "Yes, they were well."

And thence it passed to Ovide, his books, wife, and

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rear room, the room best remembered by Rosalie—with a fresh pang of perplexity—as the one where, on the afternoon of Zéphire's smash-up, she and grand-mère had found the two Castletons mysteriously closeted with the black man. Philip mentioned the place to tell the droll story of Ovide's wife and a child who came to the shop with books to sell; how the child, speaking of their owner's extreme age, was in doubt whether it was eighty-four or forty-eight.

XL

LOVE TAKEN ABACK

It was very amusing! "And Ovide, what did he say?"

"He let his wife say it."

"Ah, yes; and she, how is that droll about her?"

"She wouldn't let me laugh: Told me to laugh at myself. Preached! Said: 'Young folks all alike. You all blin' alike—'bout grown-ups. De fires o' life har'ly bu'n clair in yo' forerunners afo' you take fo' granted dey bu'nt out, leavin' dess empty shell'. I tell you, us real grown-ups ain't empty shell'. Us ain't—empty—shell'!'"

That was amusing, too, but the mirth was brief. "Why did she say that to—to you?"

"Oh, I stood for youth in general, I suppose."

There was room for doubt. The eyes of the pair encountered and Rosalie felt a flush of enlightenment. The old woman's preachment meant Philip and her in particular, them and their two dearest "forerunners"; meant that the same passion, in the same incarnate fulness, which was making life—making this very hour—so cruelly sweet for these two, was making it as sweet and as cruel for grand'mère; for beautiful grand'mère, making it so a *second time*, with a lifetime of saintly resignation in between.

It should not be! In a moment as brief as that un-

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uttered cry the soul of the quiet girl was transformed. It should not be! At last the quiet sufferer's whole inner being, rational and irrational, sprang to arms in revolt. And, as strange as that, was this—that all the mute arraignments that swarmed from her heart were against the youth at her side. Suddenly in her mind he—he—was both the occasion and the agent of all these fettering, crippling, heart-breaking entanglements of loves and fortunes. Even the exiled Zéphire seemed his excusable victim. Like a mob through burning streets, insurrection ran through her every vein, decrying Philip Castleton, Philip Castleton. This last thing, this *last* thing, should not be, and he should see to it that it should not be. How the prevention was to be worked she knew not, but her soul cried to her—womanlike—that whatever must be done there is a way to do, and that the lover must find the way, find it unprompted.

Now she could meet, could even seek, his glance. By that sign he discerned what the old woman's words had conveyed to her. And also he saw, to his unspeakable consternation, that in some way impossible for him to harmonize with justice or reason it had sent her heart beating backward from him in this earthquake revulsion of sentiment. As totally without warning as one might be swept overboard; as clearly to be seen as if within hand's reach, yet at the bottom of the sea! She was lost! All her sweet courtesies and Creole graces were here with her yet, but suddenly *they* were empty shells. He gazed in pain, and she,

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ever talking, tinkling on in her shining trivialities, could meet even his gaze, while "You are odious" whispered the empty shells, under the talk. He reddened with injured wonder, with inward moanings, stumbled in their conversational pitter-patter, laughed, and stayed red.

Whereupon—for enraged love, love bent on its own death, always inclines to pick some small false issue—she reverted to the first inclemency that had ever darkened their sky. "Ah, tell me! Since comparing other countries, how is that going, that"—the phrase came with a touch of mockery—"that 'Southern Question'?"

"Oh, that?"—he reddened deeper—"it's stopped going, as usual. In the public mind it's a clock run down, on the striking side."

"But you've thought it your duty to wind it up again, eh?" Her reference was to his latest printed article, "The Southern Answer." The subtlety of her tone was galling.

"Yes. I'm being roughly handled for thinking so."

"On the newspapers; yes, I know. And what is that 'Southern Answer'—according to you?"

"Nothing. We find none. Recriminations, excuses, we produce in wholesale lots, but no true reply!"

"H'mm! I'm sorry. But anyhow you just love to make the clock strike, eh?" She saw him flame up, but would not let him retort. "You haven't had trouble about that with anybody, eh?—besides the newspapers?"

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"Only with one, the most troublesome man I ever met."

"Yourself? Truly? Yes? Well, you know? I think so!"

Merciless word! An hour earlier that reply would have been pure sweetness, the breath of a garden; now it was the billows going over him in a sunken garden, so had her spirit altered. "You are trouble itself, tribulation and torture!" said that self-tortured spirit, to his, behind the word, and then to itself cried again: "'Mère! 'Mère! It shall not be! You shall have your heart's desire! Somehow, somehow, this time, whoever suffers, you shall have joy!" Retaining her lightness she spoke again:

"How is he troubling you now, that most troublesome?"

"Oh, through a small fact omitted in my article and pointed out to me last evening at dinner."

"Ah, facts! They fatigue me!"

"And me!" laughed Philip. "They weary me to the bone!"

"Then why do you run so hard after them?"

He flushed again, his voice dropped. "Better after them than from them."

"Well, what was it, that fact they pointed out?"

"Mademoiselle,——"

"Mr. Castleton,——"

"When the band plays 'Dixie' or 'Swanee River' our fancy pictures 'the old folks at home,' doesn't it? The old-time landed squire on the old plantation?"

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"Ah, yes. Well, of course, naturally!"

"The squire was our social unit, the keystone of our whole Southern scheme, was he not?"

"*Was?*" This time it was the girl who colored. "Ah, yes; doubtless, yes; assuredly he *was*."

"Well, the small fact you ask me for is—he's vanished. Our keystone's dropped out. He's being industrialized, capitalized, commercialized, modernized out of existence. Now, a revolution may, conceivably, momentarily, go backward; an evolution never; and—shall I tell you what they made me confess last night? You won't like it."

"Yes," she said, with the mental reservation that it would suit her better if she didn't like it.

"Well, 'twas this: That the whole scheme we call 'Dixie' is being superseded, overwhelmed, by an inexorable, economic evolution, with our national unity and the world's unity behind it, pushing." The lover paused, gazed. Faintly, he had seen his listener flinch—flinch not so much from his "fact" as from him, and he was stung as by a whip-lash. Yonder in Vanity Fair, a year before, he had not correctly described his temper. It was not quick, but when it burned it burned inordinately hot.

"Mademoiselle," he said, and again she flinched, though she smiled, "I know what it means to us for me to thrust that fact on you; but I cannot, will not, keep any least—any last—fraction of your regard which requires me to conceal what I think about things that I am bound to think about. That would be to honor

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neither you nor me with the honor we both have every right to claim."

Rosalie bowed twice and again in smiling approval. "Yes," she said, "yes," while all the world and all continuance in it grew as bitterly worthless to her as to him. "That's true. Yes. Of course."

The Scot left M. Durel talking with their black skipper and came and sat with the disputants. Would her lover press the subject in the hearing of this alien intruder? She must know! For him to do that would be to help put love out of its misery. "Yes," she said again, "go on to the end."

"I may as well," he laughed to her and the Scot, desperately. "Mademoiselle, our old Dixie, and our old New Orleans as well, are passing, going, have got to go——"

"Oh, assuredly! And consequently you contend—what?"

"Merely that we who love them——"

"Love them—oh-h-h-h!"

"We who dearly love them ought to have a well-shapen, rational policy for speeding them on, instead of a shapeless, emotional one for holding them back."

"Yes? You think so? Papa, wait! I'm coming there!"

The boat had just gone about. She sprang to her feet. Philip offered a steadying hand, but she took the Scot's.

XLI

ENTER FEVER

THE day wore by. Its sunbeams were nearly level when the small excursion-steamer, returning from the sea-gardens, came back among the islets of the harbor.

Again the sailboat's lofty canvas glided past, and again its four passengers were waved to by Peter and John, amiably envying their better equipment for care-freedom and pleasures of the vacant mind. At their inn's pier the two Creoles praised the hours they had spent, and said good-by, and the sailboat turned and crossed to the big hotel with Philip and the Scot.

A vast sun went down behind the red, green, pearl, purple, and golden bay, beyond hundreds of miles of ocean, beyond all peace-girt, sea-hidden America. Night followed, lone sentries paced their walls, their decks, ships' bells tapped double notes to the passing hours, and the harbor imaged back the stars. Then out of a peacock sea, with other hundreds of ocean miles and all war-tortured Europe in between, the sun rose again. In all those hours, sunset, night, dawn, and sunrise, two gazers upon water, land, and sky—one on each side the beautiful harbor—had harried their souls to plead each his or her cruel grievance to

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self, to the merciless splendors of nature, and to a pre-occupied world.

It should have been easy to state. A lover and maiden had renounced each other's love without renouncing their own and without renouncing each other's society; an agonizing thing to each, yet an every-day occurrence wherever men submit to maidens and maidens submit to parental discipline. Then, to rescue from shipwreck the fortunes of the girl and her kindred, the lover had made a business arrangement which unavoidably gave that renunciation a further binding force that was like bands of steel. Now when the relenting father, vision-prompted, sought to relax those bands, their nature made the first motion toward that release impossible to him, to his daughter, or to the lover, though neither daughter nor lover could quite see the other's helplessness.

Thus far the way was clear, terribly clear.

But that hour among the sea-gardens had suddenly worked an intolerable obscuration. It had brought to view two other sufferers, far away, and, through sheer new heartache and self-reproach for them, had beclouded the daughter's mental vision. As long as the renunciation had been but an outward act, and its bonds had held apart only the one pair while inwardly its perpetual sacrifice was an undying fire on love's altar, it had been made endurable by a rapture of martyrdom and imperishable hope. But when it was found laying half its load on other and beloved hearts, and when it seemed to become a renunciation not of love's

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yearnings alone but of love itself, life was life no more; nor love, love; nor truth, truth; nor reason, reason; all was anguish.

A maid tapped on M. Durel's chamber-door, tapped again, and was turning away, when he appeared from the story below, with the highway's white dust on his feet. As deep in trouble as ever, he had set out for his usual sea-cliff, but had retraced his steps, anxious for Rosalie.

"Your daughter, sir, would like to see you."

He found Rosalie's door ajar and her standing with a brow against its edge. "Papa, I suppose the ferry-boat is running by this time?"

"Yes, I have seen it."

"Will you please go over and engage our passage on the next steamer?"

"Ah, yes, if that is the best thing to do."

"It is the only thing."

"Yet at the same time there is no haste."

"Yes, there is haste. I must see 'mère at the first moment possible."

"For what, my child?"

She spoke audibly, though wholly to herself. "I would give all I've got to see her right now, right here."

"My daughter, listen. When I had that vision of your mother, I confided it to you. Can you confide nothing to your father?"

Her brow drooped. "There is nothing. If there ever was anything—" She lifted a hand and let it fall.

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"Then anyhow tell me this: what happened—yesterday?"

"Papa, I cannot remember. I could not be sure even then."

"Certainly something happened, my child."

"Yes, but I—I can't think what it was. I can't think at all. Papa, I fear you'll miss the ferry."

"Chère, till you can think, it would be safer to wait. You would not desire to be unreasonable."

"Yes! I—I must. Reasons are not for me. My reason is as tangled as a sick girl's hair." She smiled again. "The only thing to do with it is—cut it off."

"Of what did you talk yesterday, Rose?"

She broke laughingly into English. "Politics! Always his ruling passion! Forever politics!" She drooped again.

And there Alphonse Durel showed himself in a new light. "Ah, chérie, you know, same way a woman muz' stan' by her *rîl*-igion, a man he's ob-lige' to stan' by his politic'. Me, I wou'n' hol' that aggainz' a man."

"Ah, that's nothing; 'tis what he holds against me."

"My daughter! Tha'z impossible!"

"No, 'tis true. The way he *talks* his politics shows that he doesn't think he is the one who is being renounced. And I, I'm not renounced, for you; I'm *repudiated* for his politics. And I can't complain of that, because I've discovered he's very, very selfish. I'm convinced he would be willing to sacrifice even his aunt!—for his politics! Papa, if you please to not miss

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that ferry-boat!" She laid a hand on his shoulder. There was fever in it.

"Why, Rosalie——"

"Ah, go. If you please. And don't bring any doctor. I'll lie down till you return if you'll only not bring a doctor. . . . No, he would put me to sleep, and I abhor to sleep. I would rather be hanged. I have so much to think!"

He went, making no promise except to engage state-rooms, and on his return brought a physician, who lost no time in putting the sufferer to sleep.

Meanwhile Murray had found Philip, and at an early breakfast—which Philip, once beguiled to, was eating savagely—proposed a walk.

XLII

WITH MURRAY MEDDLING

MURRAY preferred his pipe, Philip a cigar. They set off.

"There are two Pagets," said the Scot, "East, West. I'm not proposing the harbor side of either, but a bit of ocean-shore, south side; Elbow Beach, Elbow Bay."

"What are we to see at Elbow Beach?"

"An old wreck out on the reefs if you want an excuse."

"I don't. I can see a wreck without going anywhere."

"We'll see the eternal hills, the Atlantic, heaven's blue eyes, and each other. Would you want more?"

"No, nor less. I was looking for you when you found me."

From the harbor side they turned south over the hills and soon were picking their way among the rocks of a "tribe-road," the Briton leading and Philip most unwontedly and fervidly voluble. "I know girls do so, but an angel from heaven couldn't have persuaded me that *she* could do it. The wind itself never changed more suddenly or more clear about. 'Twas as if in one flash she'd learned something——"

"Or guessed it, mayhap."

"Guessed? Well, guessed something that trans-

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formed me to her, and as if in that flash she'd lost all faith in my outward renunciation——”

“Or inner constancy——”

“No, sir! She couldn't doubt both at once! Lost faith, I say, in my surrender of her and saw me, in her imagination, trying, after all, to buy, to *bribe*, the happiness I couldn't earn or beg. But why do you say she guessed it?”

“I don't say, I ask. For I know no mortal told her and I know there was plenty to guess.”

Philip halted in the dry, tumbled sands of the coral bluffs on which they had emerged. “Who told you?”

“Lawndry. I guessed it first and worried it out of him.”

“What did you guess? What has he told you?”

“That mad self-sacrifice of yours and the judge's.”

“It wasn't mad at all.”

“It was.”

“It was not, Mr. Murray; it——”

“It was, Mr. Castleton; and when you and he could commit *that* insanity it's ‘up to you,’ as ye say, to let this Creole girl—heart-torn for her father and her beautiful grand'mère—it's up to you to let the Creole girl be a bit daft—in turn.”

“She'll never claim that as a Creole right.”

“She need not. Come, let's thrash the thing out.”

“Good! For it's thrashed me ever since she left us.”

“I know, Castleton. Lord! I once had my turn.”

Philip was surprised and touched; the judge had never told him that. As the two sat down in a shade

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of young cedars and faced the southern blue, above, below, the Scot, for relief, said: "Yon way's the West Indies, if we could see over old Neptune's hump-shoulders."

The lover smiled. "Let's skip the West Indies; there are other humps I'd a lot rather see over."

"Well, for hump the first, I call your self-sacrifice insanity; yet once I was as insane—unsane—for one I loved, knowing she loved me and counting that knowledge treasure enough."

"It is! 'Twas all *I* asked, sir, for the rest of life."

"Well, and if I guess right—maybe I don't—'twas all your Crreole girrl asked till, suddenly to her, up springs another claimant, dearrer to her than——"

"Another claimant—" Philip started, stared. "How much of my talk did you hear yesterday?"

"All you wanted hearrd. You paraded it, you know."

The young man mused aloud. "Another claimant on her——"

"Ay, on her love; and an equal partner in her sacrifice, or more than equal."

"Mr. Murray, I believe—you've—hit it! You're a seer." Both men laughed.

"No, it's you're blind, or just I'm sane, or not quite insane. So I say give your Crreole girrl the same two liberties you claim; the same unselfishness—or a finer; the same unreason—or a wilder. We men, laddie, rarrely appreciate in women the strength of other sorts o' love that may conflict with the love of maid

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for man. We say, 'Oh, y'r grandmither!' not drreaming that it's just the dear grandmither—be she in the sere leaf or yet bonnie, who may be cause enough for such conflict: enough and to spare."

Philip answered eagerly: "As a generality, allowed! But, my dear sir, in this case, away back of that point, why should a claim, real or fanciful, of my generosity on mademoiselle's gratitude not bring us together, and those other two with us, rather than hold us apart?"

"Man, it should do neither! But away back o' *that* again lies your claim on her father's gratitude, and that claim—he feeling to you as he long did—she can never tolerate and remain the supernal creature she is."

The lover responded abstractedly: "To the million that would seem pretty flimsy preaching."

"To the mil"—Lorrd! what have souls like hers—or even yours—to do with the million?"

"Sometimes," said Philip, "the million are right." Suddenly he warmed again: "But, right or wrong, why should our separation hold those other two apart?"

"It should not! For this is their lawst chawnce. That's what the girrl sees and is mad wi' grief to see."

"But why should she think it will part them?"

"For one reason: Taught by her own unselfishness—as far above yours as yours is above the common—she fears they will never wed leaving you and her unjoined."

"Oh, that *would* be insane. It's insane to fear it."

"No! No! Think how they'd look, at their age,

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with you two held apart. To women, doing anything, the look of it, even to the million, means—ay, has to mean—whole chapters it need not mean to men.”

“Right. Yes, true. I give it up.”

“What up?”

“The whole argument. Your mind’s eye is mighty clear.”

“Hawh! The mind’s eye, like the body’s, sees mostly by guess. But yours, egad, sees naught. Else yesterday you’d not have lugged in politics, *I* guess.”

“Why, Mr. Murray, it was she did that.”

“’Twas you let her do it!”

“I did. Didn’t you just now imply that my politics are the inmost tangle of the whole snarl? They are. And so, I let her lug them in; I hoped her father would hear.”

“He hearrd.”

“But I had a larger reason. My dear sir, sanely or madly, as you please, her city and mine, our dear mother city and Dixie’s, to my mind’s eye, and to my heart’s fate, has come to mean just her, herself, Rosalie Durel. She even seems to mean that I should see it so; that for our city, in large degree or small, to reject me is for her, its shining impersonation, to do so; and that for it to open arms to me is the only chance for her arms to open. She seemed yesterday to gird herself in that impersonation and to make it her last word, her ultimatum.”

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"Now, *that is* flimsy, laddie; she's shamming! She's but playing that old mother-bird trick o' the brroken wing. She's but fighting a rear-guard action to give her father free choice between intrenchment and retreat."

"Heaven grant your guess. Yet do you wonder that I tried to name the lowest terms on which I can meet that ultimatum and still keep the soul I must keep if it's ever to mate with hers?"

"And so says you: 'The old Dixie and her old capital are going and should be helped to go.' How tactful! Haw-haw!"

"Wasn't it! And there——"

"There I came tactfully butting in and she fled! But what would you have told her besides?"

Philip sprang up, reddening, and began to pour out words: "I'd have told her some things I'm at last getting my Tulane boys to listen to; that a true lover of his city, to deserve her smiles, her arms, must do his finest to help fit her for a high place in the world—oh, better—for a high place in the world's service! And he can't do that, sir, by following political fashions. Nor can he do it by echoing the provincial flatteries of her office-seekers and her press. It can't be done, you know, by keeping her the mother city of an antiquated Dixie out of step with the nation and the world; and much less by Americanizing those fine old Creole ways—in manners, in architecture, in social and domestic life—which are just what ought, instead, to Creolize her American crassness."

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"Creolize her American crassness! Bravo, Jeremiah!"

"Yes, sir, yes. Why, Mr. Murray, to say no better, there'd be more *money* in it, in the long run, than in perpetuating old Creole foibles; yearly packing our streets full of raw sensation-hunters swarming to see us outdo—with what grotesque vastness and childish art!—the follies of Naples, for instance, instead of her beautiful industries. There'd be more real welfare and happiness in it than in doubling our population or our dollars for the sake of mere population and dollars, excellent as they both are."

"You'd say all that to mademoiselle?"

"If she'd hear me, yes! But she wouldn't."

"She couldn't. You book!"

"She loves books!" laughed the youth. "Oh, I don't so much mind being like a book if the book's a live one. I'd tell her more. I'd tell her I want our city to see—to foresee—that a city may be a million big and yet remain a village."

"Man! Numbers help mightily to make a city grreat."

"Yes, help, but that's all, and they help in vain if manners and customs, justice and equity, arts, crafts, and learning, civic order, beauty, and high-mindedness don't play their full parts. *They* are what make a city great and give it the numbers best for its truest prosperity. The greatest cities in history, Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, were never as populous as Peking. Neither London nor Paris owe their greatness to their

WITH MURRAY MEDDLING

bigness, and I dare say you, a banker, would rather lose Manchester and Birmingham than Oxford and Cambridge."

The challenge went unanswered. "I doubt," the Scot smilingly remarked, "if you could say with which you're the deeper in love, y'r girrl or y'r city."

"Oh, sir! She *is* the city. They're one, grafted together in my heart. She is my New Orleans, and New Orleans is my city of Rosalie." With a laugh at himself the lover sank again to the sand, staring out to sea, his friend contemplating him with tender amusement. Whatever unreality there may have been in the source of his trouble was more than offset by the depth of his distress.

"That's all," he added, "and it's all in vain."

A stir behind drew the Briton's eye. M. Durel came softly through the dry sand.

XLIII

LOVE NEGOTIATES

THE Scot lifted an admonishing finger to him, and he stopped in the shade of a juniper while the Scot asked Philip:

"And why is it all in vain?"

"Because, I tell you, what now holds us apart isn't how I stand to my city; it's this 'embarrassed gratitude' standing like a spectre between her and me."

"How d'you know? Her harking back to y'r politics seems to say: 'Settle that and you settle all.'"

"No, it only veils—you know how instinctively girls veil things—Creole girls, especially, I fancy—it only veils this debt-of-gratitude issue. Under that veil she bids me lift this imaginary debt or forfeit her love forever. And there's where she makes my plight insufferable. While I thought I held her heart I could live—could have lived all my days—in a superb joy poured out into a hand I might never hold; but with her love lost, for me to go on holding her heart *in my debt*, however unreally if she counts it real, I cannot live—I cannot live!—that way."

"Lad, you need not."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Murray, one thing I've learned;

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learned it even in men's politics and all the more in woman's love—that the more nearly imaginary a thing is, the more invincible it may be.”

The Scot meditated. “I know. Man, I know! I'm the fish that was caught once mysel' wi' a silken line. Castleton, 'tis an ill turn I've done you, tempting you to this island; is it not?”

“I can't tell good from ill at the crack of a whip.”

The Creole behind them stirred uneasily, but the Scot's covert gesture held him while Philip added:

“Mr. Murray, you can make it a good turn, yet.”

“Well, how? Say on.”

“It's hard to say, sir, but I say it for others. I don't ask a grain of direct share in its benefits, my indirect share will be big enough.”

“What are you driving at?”

“I want you, for the sake of her father, for the sake of that older pair, and, above all, for her sake, I want you to lift that so-called debt.”

The Briton moved to interrupt, but Philip held him by the knee and spoke on: “I don't forget you're a financier, and a Scotch one, with all the disdain for financial kite-flying which, from your view-point, this piece of business deserves——”

“Yet you want me to fly kites with you.”

“No, without me. I must be left out; dropped as absolutely out of the transaction, right now, as you saw me dropped out of her affections yesterday.”

“Are you sure that's not another caper of imagination-gone-daft?”

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"Oh, sir, that drop was real; I feel myself falling yet. You can't save me from that. I don't ask you to save *me* from anything. It's they whom I want saved—from me. I want you to make what I am still sane enough—or insane enough—to call an investment. I offer it purely on its merits, to the one single outsider who knows their real value."

"Oh, ay. You want me to go into the hole I pull you out of."

"Precisely."

"You'd have me knock your irons off and wear them for you, you guaranteeing only that if——"

"If nothing. We have enough whimsies already. My guarantee would make the whole arrangement a sham worthless to all of us, not excepting even you. I tender it on its own chances. I can do no more, no less, and be the man I've got to be."

"And the man I'd like you to be. But, my dear fellow, haven't you had enough o' my meddling? Grawnting I'm born with the gift for it, I've yet never been a financial meddler. Grawnting I'm a sentimentalist, I've never been a financial one. That's the most venomous species. Besides which, I take no shine, as ye say, to a prroposition that is not mainly for you and her as one. And yet—I'll tell you." They rose together, the Scot laying an arm fondly across his companion's shoulders to insure against his looking behind: "I—I'll—I'll think it over. Leave me here; 'tis a good place for thought—has certain advawntages. I'll go wi' you a step on the beach for a sight o' the

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wreck and show you another way back o'er the hills, and return here to consult—my—my best judgment."

"No," said Philip, gratefully putting off the arm, "I want to be alone as badly as you do."

As the two moved apart, "Oh, here!" called the Scot, "you'll be stopping at the steamer office to bespeak—yes. Well, I'll take a room wi' you—or next you, if you prefer. And I'll rejoin you at the hotel."

When he got back to monsieur's juniper he found no sign of him but his footprints. For a moment annoyed, in the next he was more than half pleased and set out to overtake him.

XLIV

PRIDE THINKS ABOUT IT

"HE'LL parley!" thought the Scot, as he pursued. "He'll parley, if no better! Were he ready to reject it he'd have waited for me!"

Overtaken on the white highway where the inn was but a few rods to the left and the hotel a good mile around the harbor to the right, the Creole began to talk of irrelevant trifles. He extolled the view near and far for its present aspect and yet more for that of an hour earlier when he had gone and come over Salt Kettle Ferry.

"With your daughter?"

No, she was keeping her room as yet, trying to sleep off a headache. He had stolen away—"to rif-rezh the brain in that morning air"—while Rosalie drowsed. But he had been too long away and must hasten back. He could not let the Scot so "put out himseff" as to go that way with him—"Ah, no!" he could quite as well go the Scot's way a piece. They compromised on a steady to-and-fro loiter under a roadside wall and so talked on.

"Mr. Durel!"

"Mr. Murray?"

"Gallant chap, that Castleton."

"Yes. Ah, yes, gallant; perchanz' a li'l' too gallant, with so many strenge picculiaritie'."

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Murray laughed. "Man, they're but two or three, and they give him indiveeduality. But indiveedualism mayhap is something you don't grreatly prize?"

Monsieur shrugged. "Not necessa-rilly," he said.

"I suppose 'tis as much in my Brritish make-up to like him for his indiveedualism as it is for you to be exawsperated by it."

The Creole tossed a hand. "For me 'tis worz' than a fly in the face! An' still—" He shrugged again.

"Now, pawssing that, what do you think of his proposition? You hearrd it."

Monsieur walked several steps before he dropped his palms and lifted his shoulders once more. Then he said: "I billieve Mr. Murray himseff has not told, even to Mr. Cazzleton, w'at himseff *he* thing abboud that."

"Because, man, I must first know how far any arrangement is going to shut Castleton out, and how far 'tis going to let him in. And 'tis only you, Mr. Durel, can say that."

"No, that ricquire' also my daughter; her an' me together, yes. An' yet, still, ad the same time, we cann' tell you that till firz' we know w'at is yo' opinion. I'm verrie sorrie, but—" One shrug more.

"Well, I'll say this much; if you'll leave it all to your daughter——"

Monsieur's hand rose. "I'm verrie sorrie, but—to leave that all to her—she wou'n' allow uz."

The Scot drew a long breath. "Lorrd! What next?"

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Was ever such bondage in so gossamer a web! Come, let us get to the bottom of this thing!"

Yet one more shrug. "I thing we are there."

"Well, tell me this: Does y'r daughter—does she care? Or—or does she not?"

"Ah, sir! How is that possible for me to know?"

"Well, suppose I say that if you and she——"

"Pardon. To 'su'pose if'—tha'z, after all, only to 'su'pose if'; tha'z not to prop-ose."

"Well, then, here! I do prropose—that if you and mademoiselle—you don't mind *that* if?"

"No, tha'z all right; tha'z neces-sary."

"If you and she will overlook your sense of obligation to Castleton and his grandfather——"

The Creole was shaking his head. "Ah, sir, that also, tha'z impossible."

"Ay, verily! . . . Ay! As a sentiment, trrue, rright. But if you two will consent to regard those two as no longer holding over you any *constraining* obligation when I've accepted this proposition and taken their place behind Lawndry, egad, I'll do it!—and the four of you—the six—may stand free."

"Egcep' from yo'seff."

"That shall never gall ye."

"An' if we cannot consen'?"

"Then, man, I will not do it. In short, 'tis on the lad's behawf I propose it. True, if your daughter were not all she is 'twould be differrent. Yet being all she is, 'tis what he is that persuades me, and that I would plead for your persuasion."

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"Ad the same time, you know, there is the probab'lity—an' I thing tha'z now large, that probab'lity—that after tha'z all arrange' an' complete' my daughter she'll maybe find herseff not verrie much interes'd in Mr. Cazzleton, with his so many picculiaritie', you know? I thing, those, they are maybe right now the cause of her migraine."

"We leave him to that chawnce. He'd have it so. So there's your if. Do you say yea or nay?"

The reply was neither. "For me—and for my daughter like-wise—to see the authenticitie of that arremgement—that would be a verrie diffycult. An' tha'z where Mr. Cazzleton he's right when he ask' to be leave out. Biccause, you see, if he's let in, tha'z to make you the same as juz', eh, juz' his—power of attorney; an' w'atever that ori-ginal obligation bitwin him an' me, it rimain in principle, an' likewise in the public eye, like biffa'."

"Lord, Lord, Lord! Mr. Durel, no! Surely it should suffice that he's *sought* to be left out. Is not this all exclusively between us four—or six—or eight or nine, counting the two Lawndrys and me? Not even your closest circle has an inkling of it."

"Ah!"—the old shrug and a pained smile—"that is a good maxim, 'murder will out,' eh?"

"True! But which wad be the rrranker murrder, to make this deal or to brreak up the game?"

The Creole flinched. "Mr. Murray"—he had begun to withdraw toward the inn—"I thing you muz' perceive tha'z not easy to choose. I will tell you. Like

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you say, yo'seff, to Mr. Cazzleton, I will, eh—I'll thing abboud that."

"Oh, Lorrd! Well, please remember that he and I are booked to sail day after to-morrow morning."

Monsieur's arms dropped heavily. "Rosalie an' me the same! We are book' sinz' biffio' breakfaz'."

"The devil!" exclaimed Murray.

The Creole bridled. "You muz' pardon me if I don't un'erstan' that egs-clam-ation—in thiz conneg-tion."

"Forgive it! But this one thing you must do——"

"Yes? Must? 'Ow is that? Must?"

"Lorrd! Must, nay, perhaps, or what not! Only, tell y'r daughter all this talk before we meet on deck. Man, will you? Or will you not?"

"Well, eh, ad the present she's got——"

Both men observed, down the harbor, a forlorn-looking inbound steamer flying the British flag as she crept into view. "She's naught," said the Scot. "A tub in distress. We're sailing everything these days that can work a pump. At present y'r daughter, you were remarking——"

"My daughter—I cann' tell her those thing' now, biccuse that migraine. But there are yet two days. I will, eh—I will thing also abboud that."

XLV

RENEGADES REAPPEAR

A LETTER from the judge, delayed by the island censor, reached Philip's hand in the afternoon of that same day. That day, I mean, in which the Scot had promised Philip, and monsieur had later promised the Scot, to "think about" that private matter whose need to be thought about eclipsed all news of intercontinental diplomacy and of war's nearest and farthest havoc.

This same might be said of a letter from grand'mère to Rosalie. Each missive bore its bit of tidings, worthy of more note than the preoccupations of that day, or the next, or the next, could quite make room for. Rosalie's bit had its source in the western hemisphere, Philip's in the eastern, as follows:

In New York those friends of Rosalie with whom she and grand'mère had gone yachting in the Gulf the summer before, who subsequently, in New Orleans, at the Smiths' reception, had turned out to be cousins of Mrs. Holden, and who lately had shown Rosalie pleasant attentions during her search for a New York entrance to a world career, had announced the coming marriage of a daughter. Her father, said grand'mère's letter, had sent the college mother and daughter a fat check for all expenses of travel and dress incidental to their atten-

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dance at the wedding. Rosalie was, pensively, glad for the Holdens' sake.

The item in the letter to Philip was from Port Said ! It had found its way under the Mediterranean and Atlantic, and over much of America, to the judge, in New Orleans. Bewildering ! Not the journey but the tidings. How difficult to realize, how impossible to doubt, and how strangely it broke in upon this heavy state of affairs in Bermuda—in Louisiana. Philip sat and thought about it, stood and thought about it, walked, stood again, sat again and thought about it.

“Why—why—why, auntie, auntie !”

So he would have been saying at intervals still as he stood with his Scotch friend on a deck of the departing Bermuda-New York steamer, painfully aware of the Durels, close by, had not the attention of both pairs been diverted by the coming aboard, from a lighter, of a dozen or so men and women, refugees from Mexico. Some were Latins, some Britons. They were bound across the ocean, but compelled to leave the leaking freighter which had brought them thus far and still lay moored in the harbor.

A lighter bearing passengers to one's own ship is always of overwhelming interest even when no face looks up from it which one remembers to have seen before. Now the ship moved, the emptied lighter dropped away, and after an hour or two the steamer left astern the last intricacies of the Bermudian reefs, dropped her pilot and headed for Sandy Hook.

Among the refugees was one, a woman, who, at a

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single upward glance as she came aboard knew Philip and would have been known by him if his eyes had not just then been fixed, as she noted, on the Creole girl. This girl she early sought out on the promenade-deck.

Some vestige of Rosalie's headache doubtless burdened her yet, for neither blue sky nor rainbow sea could tempt her from a reclining-chair behind monsieur and the Scot, who stood at the rail discussing the war so interestingly that others edged up to hear. One who came into a corner of Rosalie's eye close by her was a middle-aged woman somewhat made up, somewhat overdressed, and, in spirit, somewhat weather-beaten. On a witty though grave reply of monsieur to the Scot she venturingly commented, in undertone and in pure French, to Rosalie.

"True!" she said exultantly, "true! Ah, I too am for the Allies, body and soul! And you?"

In the same tongue Rosalie confessed she was.

"Is not—is not that your father; the one whom he in the Scotch cap just now called Durel?"

"He is," Rosalie was proud to admit.

"To hear him called that name, Durel—ah, how it startled me!" the stranger said.

Rosalie smiled. "Just the name?" she asked. "And a name so common?" But suddenly another name, merely brought to mind, startled her half from her chair.

The woman met her gaze with sad eyes that soon dropped to the deck, and spoke dejectedly: "Durel is my name also—by marriage—to your cousin Zéphire."

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Rosalie caught her breath, but a passing of deck-walkers, and a glance from her father, recalled her to herself and she outwardly relaxed. "Do you think," she asked aloud in English, "the Allies will win?"

The woman sank into a chair at her side, responding in English: "Whether they win or lose, we are on our way to join them"—she reverted to French—"if only we can get by New York."

"You mean that Zéphire is here? With you? Aboard?"

The woman's voice grew softly intense. "Mademoiselle, yes; and yet, no. Please do not speak his name. He is here, but—he is another man."

Mentally Rosalie kept her poise, but her frame trembled to the knees and she choked as she said: "You are Madame Philomèle."

"Again both yes and no. I was!" Tears filled the clairvoyante's eyes, and her mouth twitched emotionally. "Mademoiselle, we have been through purgatory."

"Mexico?"

"Yes, but also worse. Our purgatory was not a land or people or any visible condition."

"But at any rate you have come through."

"Ah, once more yes and no. We have passed through, and through, and through, yet are passing through still. That is why we would go to the war. We go for mercy, of course, but we go also for penance, glad thus to cover some of our sins." The tears ran down. The weeper owned up to them by a smile of

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heroic candor while masking them from promenaders by adjustments of her Spanish veil.

If the pose, the words, were not genuine they were capital acting, thought Rosalie, ashamed of her mis-giving, which the woman seemed to discern.

"Also," said Philomèle, "we need to prove, even to ourselves, the reality of our repentance. Ah, if you or your father could see Zéphire you would——"

"No-no-no," whispered the girl, "my father cannot!"

"You mistake me!" Philomèle hurried to reply. "Zéphire does not desire it. But, ah, mademoiselle, he and I are in a terribly narrow place."

Rosalie shook her head. "If you mean for money——"

"Oh, money!—we have plenty. But we had hoped to go direct to France. Now this change of ships, taking in New York, brings a most unlooked-for peril not to us alone, bodily, but to something which has become to him—as I know it is to you and your father—dearer than bodily safety. You understand?"

"For my father's sake I wish it were the honor of his injured name, the name of Durel."

"That is my meaning. And that makes our peril your father's and yours in all but the bodily part, and that is the least to care for—after Mexico."

XLVI

SUPPLYING A MISSING LINE

"Is this peril," murmured Rosalie, "the—police?"

"Of New York! We are in torture lest you and your father be made partners in our shame. At quarantine a man will say: 'Sir, despite your full beard and Spanish name, good morning, Zéphire Durel.' Then to your father: 'Odd coincidence, sir, that you, of the same name, kin, city, late of the same bank, are here on the same ship at the same time.' And then the newspapers—of forty-eight States: 'Durel, Durel, Durel!'" Philomèle lifted her eyes, sighed musically, and dropped her arms.

"Oh," said Rosalie, leaving her seat, "they won't know him. I, myself, looking down into the lighter, failed to discover him."

The clairvoyante rose with her. "Mademoiselle," she said, "is not a detective."

"True, nor yet a good sailor. I must——"

The father interrupted. "Ah, daughter, going in?"

"Yes, papa, or, rather, no; I will try a few steps up and down, just yonder, in your view."

Both men scanned the girl's companion, whom they had never before seen; but her make-up seemed merely Spanish-American. Her smile, overbright from over-use, disarmed them and they resumed their converse.

SUPPLYING A MISSING LINE

The two women chose a short beat round and round the stern of the ship, appearing and reappearing to the watchful parent, who at each return glimpsed them over the Scot's shoulder, and by and by over Philip's, when he came and joined the debate.

"Dear mademoiselle!" the clairvoyante pleaded on, "my terror for Zéphire, and his and mine for you and your father—and for the Durel name—is that detectives will not have to detect! A certain passenger will know him and point him out to them!"

Whom she meant was clear. At every emergence into view of the three debaters she turned short to avoid the risk of a backward glance from Philip. But Rosalie was careful to generalize. "Oh, how could any man do such a thing to any man?" she softly cried.

"Mademoiselle, there are few who, so placed, could refrain. He knows nothing of Zéphire's marriage or changed life, but regards him only as—pardon!—a rival in love, a mortal foe, a fugitive from—what they call—justice."

Rosalie hesitated, put to her best to choose what to say that should be neither too much nor too little for the concealment of her own heart. Then:

"How do you know detectives will be there?"

"Ah, nowadays they are everywhere. If Mr. Castleton"—the name was spoken with a touch of esteem; to advance Philip's cause was part of the woman's strategy—"if he spies Zéphire he knows as well as we that just here on board is the 'wireless.'"

"Oh, you can keep Zéphire out of sight."

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Philomèle shook her head. "Those same eyes I would hide him from"—again the tone of esteem—"would recognize me. They saw me once; that is enough."

"But I can hide you."

"Angel! Nay, those eyes—you know them——"

"Only as good, normal eyes."

"Ah, you know better! Those eyes will count us thirteen refugees—again, as I saw them do when we were on the lighter." [A falsehood.] "So counting, they will say 'two missing!' and will know at once."

"And then?"

"Then the 'wireless.' New York will do the rest."

"Unbelievable!" laughed Rosalie. "He couldn't stoop to such an act. If he could, madame, certain things never would have happened as they have. I am free to praise him. He is no longer in my train."

Philomèle winced with chagrin. Whether she was truly married or only hoping to be so, she believed this girl to be still the main obstacle between her and her quite unregenerate Zéphire. "Ah," she said, "what a heaven you have thrown away!"

"Say, rather, lost, madame."

"Ah, never, never! Tell me the truth. Most of it I know already, but this amazes me, clairvoyante though I am. Tell me! Who knows but I can help you—or him—to whom I owe so much?"

"You?" came the overprompt challenge. "To him?"

"Aha!" thought Philomèle, but replied artlessly:

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"It was through him I got my Bibi! My Zéphire!"

The note of love triumphant wrung Rosalie's heart. So Philomèle designed. "I'll make you hunger for him," she said in her mind, "lest you yet make me hunger for Zéphire."

Rosalie's response was quiet. "How can you help me, when I cannot believe in the smallest part of all your spells, incantations, charms, hand-reading, card-reading——"

"Never mind them. Believe only that the unravelling of countless love troubles has made me wise. Tell me the story, what little I do not know."

It was soon told, to the end, to the deadlock, and in silence the pair walked on to and fro. Then, venturing a smile, the woman spoke: "Could a love tangle be more typically Creole!"

But she was quickly grave again as Rosalie retorted: "It is not merely a love tangle."

"My faith! It is a"—Philomèle made eyes as big as the words—"a Gordian knot!"

"And of how many, many cords!" insisted the girl.

"So many," said the other, "that it must, must, must be cut! Yet who shall cut it?"

"Not my papa! And assuredly not I!"

"Assuredly not!" said the woman, while she thought, "We'll see. We'll see." "Mademoiselle," she added, "there is a line missing from your story."

"Which you can supply?"

"Yes, this: To one good, fair person——"

"One? Good? Fair?" Rosalie felt an acute alarm.

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

"Yes, mademoiselle. To her this deadlock offers a chance of happiness; a chance so—well,—so plausible—that her heart has fed on it——"

"Her heart? I did not quite——"

"Her poor heart has lived on it nearly a year."

"Who—how have you learned of that?"

"I can only say, not by clairvoyance."

Rosalie laughed. "Well, if that should be happiness for him also, I too should be pleased. But who is that one so good and fair? Is she also rich?"

"No, poor. She is Miss Emily Holden."

"My faith!" Rosalie whispered. "Does she think he is rich, or is she too deep in—eh——?"

"As deep as the sea under us right here."

"Ha-ha! And he with her?"

The woman shook her head in solemn negative.

"Oh, then!—ha, ha!—in that case——"

"Mademoiselle, remember! When one of our sex—good, fair, demure—is as deep in as that, and the man is the right man, in the end, unless a rival plays the game better than she, she will trap him; she cannot help but be a trap; 'tis her human right. But how far we wander from our subject, while this danger to Zéphire grows with every tick of the clock, and you, you alone, can save us!"

"You mean I can—can intercede?"

"Ah, if you would! If you will! I know you would rather he were any one else alive; but oh, for sweet mercy—and your father—and the Durel name—if you will!—and at once!"

SUPPLYING A MISSING LINE

They passed beyond their beat and stood by the rail, with Rosalie in sight of any of the three men if any chose to glance their way. Said the woman tenderly, in English: "You have a headache."

"'Twill pass. I suppose 'tis the ship's motion."

"And you will do us, all, that great mercy?"

"Leave me here," murmured the girl. "I will—I will think about that. Quick, he's coming."

XLVII

"COME BACK," SAYS SHE

MADemoiselle lingered at the rail alone.

On the other side of the boat porpoises were playing and passengers were crowding the rails of two decks to see them, but she had often seen porpoises, and passengers.

In full sight of her father she could afford to loiter thus apart, although to do so was a palpable challenge to Philip. So be it! He should have this chance to set matters straight if they could be set straight. And here he came.

He had left her father and the Scot debating and was half-way to her. He had given himself an idle air and sauntering gait, but they proved unlucky. Modestly a small, refined-looking male stranger escorting a wife and daughter, large golden blondes, halted him.

"Ciel!" thought Rosalie, "if passengers would only——!"

But to have a large blonde daughter on one's hands is a desperate situation, and out of a chronic despair the father and mother clutched at this auspicious straw. With bashful fervor the matron begged leave to ask a question or two about New Orleans, whose next Carnival they had hoped to see. How great was the danger of New Orleans being swept away if its

"COME BACK," SAYS SHE

"lev-ee" should break while the Mississippi was high? And how do you pronounce T-c-h-o-u-p-i-t-o-u-l-a-s Street? And were they detaining him? And (this by the husband, in very full voice) what *was* a Creole, anyhow? And—pardon!—wouldn't Philip sit down with them?

When he gratefully declined, the mother told, to him and her daughter as one, an ancient tale of Creoles, from some magazine, she wasn't sure which, by an author whose name she hadn't noticed. She cared little who wrote a thing if it was only interesting! Just there Rosalie went by, granting Philip a bow and smile of transcendent sweetness, which yet cast a hint of arraignment that both flattered and stung. She paused a moment between her father and Murray, exchanged pleasantries, and went on to her room. The Scot turned again to Mr. Durel:

"Evidently you've talked it over with her."

"With her, no. To her, yes. She won't talk."

"How d'you interpret that?"

"That I interpret—that so sure as our negotiation' let Cazzleton in she'll leave him out. Even if she don't want she's goin' to feel compel'!"

"And if we leave him out will't be vice versa?"

"No-o, my dear sir! Vice versa, no-o!"

The bugle rang for lunch. No Rosalie. But at dinner she reappeared, beautifully dressed and, though pensive, most fair to look on. She sat next her father, facing Murray. At Murray's elbow Philip faced her father. Next beyond Philip was the blonde girl, with

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her small father beyond her, and her large mother opposite, close to monsieur. The matron began the conversation by a word to Philip which gave Rosalie a grain of comfort:

"We haven't seen you since you left us at lunch—except at a distance, seeming to be looking for something you'd lost?" She twinkled.

"I must have caught the look from those refugees."

"You have been with them?" Rosalie asked him.

"Yes, for a moment, once or twice."

"How many of them have you counted?"

"Why, I"—what an odd question!—"it hasn't occurred to me to count them," he said, and for the first time the thought struck him—Zéphire!

She saw it strike, saw it widen through his mind as his glance lingered on her inquiringly. She answered with a smile. The Scot saw the smile. The blonde girl saw it. Both saw that it had little to do with refugees and that Rosalie cared as little who saw, if Philip but understood. "Come back," said the smile, and waned; waned only that he might grasp its reach and limitations, then came again and said once more, "Come back."

When the repast was over and the seven mounted a stair he and she came side by side and Philip, with his aunt in mind, remarked: "I've been wanting, for some time, to tell you a strange bit of news."

"Zéphire!" she thought to herself. "Some time," she smilingly repeated, "but by what measure? Minutes, hours, days, weeks——?"

“COME BACK,” SAYS SHE

“Centuries,” Philip said, on the lover’s key before he knew it. But she answered lightly:

“Ah, news so old must be indeed strange.”

“I fancy you’ll call it so. I’d like”—the tone softened—“to tell you alone, out on deck.”

She replied as softly: “Not now. But by and by, if you should want to promenade——”

He flashed assent, and as he left her, “Come back,” said her smile a third time.

To frown down a sturdy elation while he smoked with the other three men taxed his best powers, and the tax was doubled when on his return she, still with the blondes, accepted his invitation before it was half uttered, and started with him around the deck, alone.

XLVIII

"I COME," SAYS HE

THEY made the circuit but once. Those who walked for wager or digestion overtook them so often that they dropped out of the running and stood by the rail, quite to themselves, while their hearts beat faster than any tread on the deck, and while, in distant view, the three older men and the two blondes placidly criticised the world and its war from their steamer-chairs.

Soon Rosalie's tone altered. "Your very strange news, what is it about? Can I guess?"

"Try! I'd like to make all I can of it."

"'Tis about people?"

"Yes, especially about two."

"And I know them?"

"You know one."

"Zéphire," she thought again.

"You never saw the other," he added.

"Philomèle," she thought, and said: "I know! A couple just very lately married."

"Yes, or presently to be married."

"And already on their way to other lands for works of mercy, of healing?"

"Yes, of mercy, of healing. You guess well."

"The likeness is so plain! But you—you are willing to let them go?"

"I COME," SAYS HE

"Why, I mustn't be too strenuously unwilling."

"Then you'll not attempt to stop them?" The query, unless a mere pleasantry, was almost a request.

"Them?" asked Philip. "I? Stop them?" He glanced drolly about him. "Why, how should I begin?"

"I don't know. By wireless? To New York?"

"Why, how comical! I can't imagine it."

"Mr. Castleton, promise me you'll not do it."

"Promise you?" The lover stood bewildered. Then abruptly he said: "Mademoiselle"—once more it thrilled them both for him to call her that—"after all, you're guessing wrong! Wrong thing, wrong persons, wrong side of the world!"

"No, I'm guessing right. Are they not on a ship?"

"As well as I know, yes."

"Ah, well as you know! Is it not this ship?"

"Mercy, no! They're half round the globe from us. It's auntie I'm speaking of! She's about to be—by now is—married!—to a missionary physician—in the party she sailed with. Auntie! Can you grasp it?"

"Assuredly I never could have guessed that."

"And marrying for love! Writes us that love is not solely, or even chiefly, for the young."

"She is right. It is not. I don't know if it is for the young at all; they make such terrible mistakes. 'Tis better to wait till one is old. Yes, love is for the old, and I find the cruellest thing in the world is for the old to be disappointed in love! Well, my guess was wrong. Now you, guess what my guess was."

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

"Mademoiselle, you've all but told me. You guessed that I knew that Zéphire Durel and Philomèle were on this boat. Now I do know. Do I not?"

Rosalie sighed. "You would have found it out. 'Twas best to tell you, in time to make you that request—which you have not yet——"

"Granted? No. I want it withdrawn."

"With'—ah! Ah-h! And why so, withdrawn?"

"Because I will not believe that you, *you*, could even dream of me as a public informer on a private enemy."

So had she herself spurned the imputation, for him, to Philomèle. Now, though with eyelids dropped, she said: "Only one thing could give me so bad a dream."

"And that one thing is——"

"Your manner of thought—about public duty. I saw that when you was on grand jury. 'Tis a very unique manner, you know?"

"Pardon, no, I do not. But go on, please."

"You might not choose, yet still you might feel duty bound not to let any private relation stop you from giving up a lawbreaker to the law."

"True! I might feel—I did once, you know—that no private affection or antipathy should stop me. But I might feel it again, yet not lift a finger. Thank heaven, no more under this British flag than under our stars and stripes, is any private citizen, as such, in duty bound to do, unasked, anything below the dignity of a private gentleman. Now, is there anything unique in that?"

"Ah, no. No"—a sidewise archness—"that's only

“I COME,” SAYS HE

unique to come from you; it sounds so much like other men, even like papa. But, anyhow, this morning, you saw that woman, walking with me?”

“Yes, I recognize now who she was.”

“And she may tell Zéphire you’ll not lift——?”

“She may. Do I understand they’re going to the fighting-line, in France?”

“Yes, he’s reformed, Mr. Castleton. Both have repented everything! That’s pretty good, eh?”

“Truly good, if they can make it good.”

“And you don’t expect that?”

“Oh, if to expect were as easy as to wish!”

“Or,” chimed Rosalie, “if to reform as easy as to expect! Papa says to reform is not just to cross the street, ’tis a long climb up-hill.”

Philip was gladdened. “That’s my notion. I wish you wouldn’t find my other notions so strange.”

“Ah, if that was only I who find them so, or papa and I. But that’s everybody. Yonder in New Orleans they call you, even—shall I tell you?—un’——”

“I know; unnatural. As they mean it I am so. Mademoiselle, can’t we walk now, and talk—differently?”

XLIX

CASHIER AND CLAIRVOYANTE

PROMENADERS for speed and health were all gone in, and these two could saunter without being jostled. They chose their beat around the after half of the ship.

"Mademoiselle," Philip resumed, "we hear of heart-to-heart discussions."

"Yes," was the eager reply, "and still we can have a mind-to-mind one."

"Can't we have both in one?" asked Philip, but got no response. A light seemed to be blown out; he began to feel his way. "Now, what do you fancy they mean by 'unnatural'? If they mean that my social theories are not controlled by my natural affections, for example, they're right; they're not so controlled."

"No!" said the girl, with secret bitterness. "I believe you! Now, explain me that." In fact, she wanted no explanation; the request was only, so to speak, her heart's wire entanglements, which Philip, as weary of this attack as he was hungry for another, would gladly have found a way round but was blind enough to see none.

"Why, we, you and I and all civilized society, are extra-natural, aren't we? Our natural affections, not excepting even love, the love of lovers, are a highly

CASHIER AND CLAIRVOYANTE

artificial product, and the artificial of to-day becomes the natural of to-morrow. To my mind that's the highest meaning of progress."

"Yes, I think so! Go on!"

"Oh, please, no! I've something better to say!"

"Not yet; by and by; first explain me that. I'm absorbed! You ought to publish it. You could make that into a beautiful romance!"

The lover all but writhed. Was this what he had been smiled back for? He got out something to the effect that wherever there was such progress there would be those to whom it must seem unnatural.

"Ah, I see! In Dixie we are too natural."

"Don't make me say that. In Dixie we are merely not extra-natural enough. We cling too fondly to last century's edition of our nature; clinging to it by our affections when we can no longer hang on by our reasons. Isn't that partly what makes us Southerners so welcome in the most modern social circles? We're antiques."

"Mr. Castleton, you are satirical on our poor Dixie."

"No, I love her too well to be that."

"You've studied that question pretty hard."

"I've fought, in my mind, a war, for its true answer."

"They are very harsh, those battles in the mind."

"My battles haven't been all in the mind. I still have a right to say that much—of the past. I loved. You know that. And my love demanded of me that true answer, as if with a deadly weapon at my head, my heart; head and heart by turns."

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

"But now you find that all of the past!" The secret bitterness was back again.

"Don't tempt me! It's of the past only by compact."

"Such love of country you had!—and of city!"

"Had? I hadn't half what I have now. Mademoiselle, how many things in this world grow by conflict!"

"Y"—yes, by—by conflict. That's true, very many."

"And none more than love. Do you know that?"

"Yes, I have learn'—I have observed that."

"Well, I want you to know too—I wish your father also might know—with how much better a love I love my New Orleans—my Dixie—my America—since that conflict within me which has sentenced to prison for life the one love I must not tell. I've a right to say that much, this once for all; the right of the condemned if no other. Have I not?" His last allowable word was said. He waited.

As the two stood face to face in the starlight, speaking in slow restraint, Rosalie's thought ran fast, deep, close to his. With an assayer's nicety, though with inward trembling, she weighed each word, each accent, of his lips as well as of her own.

"Once for all?" she repeated after him. "Ah, yes. Yes, I suppose." But meanwhile her silent thought demanded: "Why this parade of the 'one love he must not tell'? Was there another love, love of another, which by and by, elsewhere, he might tell? And why this 'once for all' and this 'right of the condemned'? Were they designed to smother down the Scot's wait-

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ing proposition and to add her dismissal of him, Philip, to his own renunciation of her? If so, with what in view? With whom in view? That one so 'good and fair' of whom the clairvoyante had spoken and whom she now thought she remembered as having been the whole past year a hovering possibility?"

Abruptly, half laughing, she sighed: "Mr. Castleton, you know? you are very confusing."

"What, I? Now? Here?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes. You tell me you have something you can't tell. Well, then, even once for all, you can't tell it. But I, I can't tell if that's so or no. If I could know what that is, I could know if you can tell it or no. But, that way it is, whether you can tell it or whether you can't, I can't tell; that's exclusively for you to conclude. Well, that's pretty con'—confusing, is it not?"

Her own words gave her a panic. She had overstepped! If, in the face of this palpable lure, the lover—who was even now replying—should still keep the silence he had pledged, she was forever shamed. Contrariwise, if—as every word now coming from him threatened—he should so forget himself as to crash through his pledge with a new avowal of his passion, new proffer of his suit, there was no refuge for her feminine self-regard but to put him off, though to put him off now—since that hour with the clairvoyante—was the farthest thing from her choice. Oh, for some petty, saving interruption! None came. Philip was saying:

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"Mademoiselle, it's far worse than confusing. It's suffocation. I am trying, have been for days—I believe we are all trying—to breathe and live and be ourselves—in a vacuum. Is that clear? Not even that? Then—then—do you ask me—do you give me leave—to explain?"

The girl's heart leapt, but her head shook gravely while she replied: "No. No, I think that's something I can't ask, neither give leave. I am sure that's for you to conclude."

"It is? You say so? Then without any one's asking or any one's leave, I'll do it." But just then the saving interruption came and she used it, murmuring:

"Wait—a moment—till those are gone."

Quietly, together, Zéphire and Philomèle stepped by. As they passed Philomèle dropped a soft good evening to Rosalie. Philip looked after them as they drew near M. Durel and the Scot. Close in front of those two, with evident reluctance on Philomèle's part, they stopped and addressed Murray. The air behind the ex-cashier bore a taint of drink. Philip and Rosalie watched them a second or two and then followed. As they reached the four Zéphire was asking, while monsieur ignored his outstretched hand:

"You don't reco'nize me, cousin Alphonse? You have forgot' your rillation?"

Monsieur solemnly shook his head. "Mmm-no," he said with an evenness of tone that thrilled every ear. "'Tis you are forgetting. I am not yo' cousin. I am not even acquaint' with any man of yo' description."

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Philomèle, pulling at her companion's arm with a firm but vain increase of weight, cast Rosalie a beseeching glance. Philip stepped forward. Zéphire shot him one ferocious gleam and returned his eyes to monsieur's. The Scot dropped his hands into his pocket and leaned on the rail, ankles crossed.

"Papa," called the daughter, "that's not the old Zéphire, that's the new, repenting all his past life."

"Yes, I perceive, by the odor." The speaker's look remained on the culprit, and as the latter rallied to speak again, monsieur drew back a step and with a palm upraised said as quietly as ever: "No. Go away. On the instant. And if you come back near me again on this ship, I give you my word as a gen'leman, I'll throw you into the sea."

Philomèle drew hard on the intruder's arm. Philip touched his shoulder. Zéphire glared in his face. Had that face betrayed one ray of kindness he would have spurned the touch; but when without such betrayal Philip said: "Let me walk a few steps with you," the three went away together.

Murray was leaning against the rail as before when Philip returned, asking: "Where are the Durels?"

"The Durels," replied the Scot, "have, as you say, retired."

L

NO FAULT O' THE SCOT

DAYBREAK found the ship rolling over a wild sea, in a cold rain and a whistling tempest.

At breakfast, at lunch, all day, all the evening, Rosalie, most unwillingly, and with an impulse to scream sticking ever in her throat, remained unseen. Only ~~men~~ were on deck. The Scot played chess with monsieur, read war pamphlets, had a lengthy rubber at pinochle with Philip, chatted with the blondes, watched Philip play chess with monsieur, played Philip at chess and again at pinochle, declined a game with Zéphire, and watched Zéphire and Philip at chess, where Zéphire showed himself much the better man. After dinner he and Philip wrote letters of courtesy back to Bermuda. Next morning the boat steamed up New York harbor in a rude, windy sunlight, with every one on deck, Rosalie between the blondes, Zéphire and Philomèle keeping a modest distance, and every one saying good-by to every one at every chance encounter.

From the dock the Durels went to one hotel, Murray and Philip to another; but the four were pledged to meet again at luncheon, which the Scot insisted, in view of his bidding America farewell next day, should be "on him." When they regathered they found the

NO FAULT O' THE SCOT

table set for six, and while he explained that Philip and he had stumbled upon the extra two in Broadway buying their tickets for New Orleans, the two appeared. They were, as Rosalie had instantly suspected, Mrs. Holden and her daughter, returning from that wedding in the railway president's family.

As the six sat down Rosalie asked the mother:

"By what train have you your tickets?"

Both mother and daughter named it.

"Yes," she said, "I think that's the best route, best train. 'Tis by that we are going likewise."

"Well!" her father commented, "I'm glad you've at laz' make up yo' mind."

"Ah, papa, on the contrary, from the beginning——"

"But we don't know if now there is any space."

"There is," said the surprising Murray. "I've made free to bespeak it." Both Durels thanked him.

"And you?" inquired Rosalie of Philip, "not starting till to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes," Philip replied, "I go on that same train." And the Scot added for him:

"Bought his ticket on his way to the hotel."

"Oh! . . . Yes?" She smiled across to the other girl, saying, "What a remarkable promptitude!" while "Collusion! ' Collusion!" whispered her heart.

With less sparkle the other smiled back and—a bit too hurriedly—asked about sea-weather and ships, islands and ocean gardens. Rosalie and Philip responded by turns, as if somehow jointly answerable.

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"But there will be two whole days on the train to tell that," said Rosalie and began to inquire about the wedding: "Was it very, very pretty?" etc.

Before the six rose Mr. Murray, seated, began some carefully unemotional remarks in farewell to America. Wonderful America, he called it, as full of merits and faults, almost, as his own Britain. He had found many valued friends, he said, in his long stay; but this small pick of them, made by happy chance on the eve of parting—these few—and two more in far Louisiana—had—with variances only of degree [a smile to the missionaries] grown into his regard in a manner quite peculiar.

The Holdens smiled so bashful a disclaimer that he kindly repeated, "with variances only of degree."

Others, he went on to say, stood for themselves as themselves, each his own human unit—which was good. So did these, emphatically, engagingly. But for some reason which he felt no need to explain even to himself, these stood also, pleasingly, tenderly, almost tragically, for their city, their region, their social cult. "Mayhap," he continued, "one cause of this is the cult itself; a true devotion, felt by each of you in his own way, to your wee bit o' the worruld. But another cause is the way these devotions have played—not to say chafed—on one another." [A venturesome smile. Faint smiles in reply, while Philip's heart and Rosalie's cried: "Get through! Have done!"]

"The souls," he went on, "the souls one can most rewardingly invest his regard in are those in and be-

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tween which one sees more things occur—eh—eh—interiorly than exteriorly. But here I put off my shoes from off my feet and draw back. If so much explains my fondness, allow it. If not, forgive it. Henceforth, beyond the ocean, among peoples forever too busy with their own shoes in the mud to give 'Dixie' a pawssing thought, I shall never hear, or see in prrint, a mention of any one of you, without very definite and arrdent good wishes for you all and for y'r city and State and all that those signify to you. Ay, the same will happen, the same sollicitudes arise, though the mention be not of any one of you, but only of y'r city or y'r South."

There was a pause. M. Durel began to respond, but the Scot drew breath to resume. Both apologized. "No," said Murray, "after you—and Castleton if the spirit moves him. I love the lawst worrud and crave it here."

The Creole spoke quietly, briefly. It was not in his temperament, he said, to tell a friend his virtues to his face, nor to express more affection in words than in deeds. Yet he must reciprocate all the sentiment so kindly offered him—and his—by the parting voyager. He wished him a safe journey, a delivered country, health, prosperity, long life, and a good memory for absent friends, who would remember him always, tenderly.

Philip said he would be pleased to offer every sentence of Mr. Durel's as his own, save one. He wished no friend would withhold expressions of affection from

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him, waiting to put them into deeds. "I don't ask for them in words; but between words and deeds there's a wide middle ground, well known to every true heart, and I'd ask my friend to put them there, where also he'll find mine. Just now, helpless as to deeds, I say only, Mr. Murray, that you're as good a friend as any man ought to want, and that there are two of my name who prize you accordingly and wish you, in all your ways, all your days, God-speed."

The Scot replied: "'Tis just between us four, with apologies to these"—the Holdens—"for a veiled allusion dark to them. As we four may chawncce never again to sit down privately together I want to say, in most affectionate protest—ay, with an aching heart—that our one piece of financial business stands unfinished—it may be through nobody's fault, but—certainly, certainly through no fault o' mine . . . I've done." He rose.

All stood up. The Holdens said good-by first. Monsieur followed. "That's right, as you say," he admitted, extending his hand, and Philip, with a like affirmation, offered his. "Finance," said Rosalie, smiling to the Holdens, "we leave that for the men!" and with a last gleam of approval to the Scot dropped a parting hand into his. But he held it so long that she spoke again. "And your steamer, to-morrow," she asked, "is the——?"

"The *Lusitania*."

LI

SOUTHWARD ALL

ALL night the southbound train had been on its way.

Now the mad wheels still smoothly rushed and sang underfoot, and the ever-changing spring landscape swung majestically by and past into or out of the memory in a shimmering mid-forenoon.

From a smoking-compartment where for an hour or so he had been lounging with M. Durel and other passengers Philip came down the aisle of the Pullman to offer the first salutations of the day to the ladies. The Holdens were seated somewhat forward of Rosalie, who was buried in a book, and the three were having the car quite to themselves. Rosalie was not in her own section. She had chosen to sit where she would be the last one reached by Philip when he should come visiting.

He paused beside the college women, expressing hopes for their comfort, and presently the mother, while lightly mentioning a bit of newspaper war comment, cleared a seat for him, and he sank to its arm—only.

One's eye did not have to leave one's book to see that much; which, after all, proved nothing. What Rosalie needed to see, what her heart ached to know, one thing

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she was on this train to learn if she could, was how far it might be yonder girl, yonder strange new-found factor in her distresses, that was keeping this "financial business" unfinished. Should that fair one turn out to be the obstacle, or an obstacle, unfinished the business must remain forever. Not even for grand'mère's sake could it be otherwise.

And how cruelly plausible it began to seem, that this fair, good girl, helplessly letting Philip drift into her heart, might have drifted into his as well. So often is a wounded heart an open one. Two souls near akin in many ways and suffering like isolations for like beliefs—how easily may they be drawn to each other. Also, to such, what a wide bridge for the interchange of mutual regards may be any discussion of even the largest public affairs—on their moral side. Who should know that better than she, Rose Durel—"since a year?"

With eyes in the book she easily heard told what the newspaper had said, having read it herself an hour earlier: That this European cataclysm was an awful warning against the risks hidden under the apparent harmlessness of all merely national, imperial, or racial standards of greatness or of a world's need. As easily she heard Philip, trying to be as light as the ladies, say that he liked that new word just coming into use, "supernational." And when the Holdens begged him to impress its value as a political touchstone on his dear Dixie she was gratified to hear him reply that to him Dixie's shortcomings—though he believed them la-

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tently as dangerous as ever—had never seemed so small or pardonable as now in the day of this collision and explosion of half a world's mistakes suddenly grown colossal.

Gratifying it was also to see the two Northerners take pleasure in both the speaker and his speech. Yet there was comfort, too, in hearing them change the subject—to books. Had Philip read Mrs. Paleblue's novel, "Brokenreed's Blunder"? He had skimmed it, yes. But, no, he had not yet seen a certain statesman's truly supernatural volume, "The Way Out."

Odd! That was the very book the solitary listener was reading. Murray had left it with her father, and its name had arrested her notice, not through its obvious meaning, a way to abolish war, but because, all the more fiercely since the Scot's farewell disclaimer, "a way out" of their own unfinished business was what her soul demanded of Philip Castleton.

Now, oddly again, here came papa himself, and before she had quite realized how much she wished it so, he had stopped beside Philip and joined the talk. Better yet, when Philip offered him his place on the arm of the seat he accepted it, though the youth was left standing. And still better again:

"One of the things I like best in the book is its warning to us," she heard Mrs. Holden say—Emily helping her through the quotation—"not to trust too much to the right machinery for doing things and not to trust too much to doing things without the right machinery.'"

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Happy hit! Philip and the daughter enjoyed it heartily together—overenjoyed it, as it seemed to Rosalie—while monsieur, less impressed, said, “Yes, pretty good,” and Rosalie’s heart wailed again: “Get through! Have done!”

“Mr. Durel,” persisted the mother, “in my belief we’ll begin to find a world’s permanent peace only when we begin to search for it with the agony of a parent seeking a lost child. Don’t you think so, Mr. Castleton?”

What mattered Mr. Castleton’s thought on that point? Yet Rosalie stopped reading while he replied: “Oh, yes, I fancy we’ve got to have both the agony and the machinery.” Saluting the group, he moved onward to her.

How swiftly thought can run when the heart thinks and the heart is a girl’s. “At last, eh? At last!” said hers as he drew near and while her eyes held to the page. “And now, most likely, being a man and a modernist, you think me not too much of a Creole to let you settle—*settle*—an affair of the heart, with me, Rosalie Durel, on a railroad-train! But you see? Look at that undisturbed papa; he knows better!”

LII

THE OTHER GIRL

"GOOD-MORNING. May I sit with you? Thank you. What's the book? Oh, 'The Way Out.' We were just discussing it."

"Yes? And you told them the mistakes of Dixie are dangerous as ever? To tell that to Northerners, and missionary Northerners—I couldn't do that; I would be too proud."

"Mademoiselle, isn't that one of our worst temptations as to Dixie? I know it's mine."

"Yours? Ours? What temptation is that?"

"To make pride the spring of our devotion instead of love. Pride of country isn't patriotism."

"Yes," she pensively said, with her eyes on the closed book, "that's one of my temptations. That's our worst mistake about many things besides Dixie."

Ah, what did that mean? Philip gave her profile a keen glance. "Don't love and pride," he asked, "often seem to clash when really they don't?"

"Ah, I suppose. I don't like deep questions."

The train was stopping at the edge of a small city. She looked out into the station. But when she turned again her smile was very sweet.

He touched the volume. "'The Way Out'—how did that title strike you when you first saw it?"

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She brightened. "You also? You noticed that? I didn't like it at all."

Philip was pleased. "I knew you wouldn't, when I saw your father with the book."

"I chanced to be in your thought at that time?"

"H'mm, chanced! But why didn't you like it? It's all right but one word, isn't it?"

"One word? I don't know. For me, yes. And you?"

They gazed eye to eye. The allusion to their unfinished business was hardly masked at all. No matter! Such interplay of hints might be very childish, but no matter! The fateful moment was before them. The lover felt himself treading forbidden ground—or golden clouds, he scarce knew which.

"I'll tell you," he said, "the word I don't like; it's 'out.' It sounds like 'back out'."

"Then what would you make it?"

"I? I'd make it 'The Way Through.' Mademoiselle——"

"Well?"

"For me it's got to be that."

The girl's response began with an arch smile, though her heart was in her throat, and interruption was impending. "It? What? What's got to be what?" She spoke hurriedly, for the car's porter was leading new passengers in—a mother of thirty-five, a son of fourteen and a daughter of twelve, all refined in dress, handsome, and Creoles at a glance.

The porter was sorry. "But dis section belong'——"

THE OTHER GIRL

"Certainly!" Rosalie and Philip crossed to her own seat. There they remained standing, she bright, he dark, with surprise. The newcomers had stopped before M. Durel, who, risen, was hailing the lady with a lively recognition which she fully reciprocated.

Philip burned with wrath. Rosalie explained: "She's my cousin, of the Mobile Durels. That's strange, to be so soon in Virginia, and more strange to be returning home. Somebody's may be not well at home." She stepped forward.

Leaving the Holdens, the father and daughter escorted the cousin to her place and stood with her again while the children appropriated the windows, and the obliterated Philip sought his own corner. There, discovering Rosalie's book in his hand, he in turn tried to be a listening reader. But the speech was French and rapid; he could make it out only by a prying attention and yet found reading so difficult that he closed the volume. He would return to the Holdens and tell them about auntie.

Coming first to the Creoles, he restored the book to Rosalie, hoping to be detained, introduced, offered a seat. But he was graciously allowed to pass on and sit down with the Northerners. On mentioning his aunt, he found them eager with an inquiry whose connection with Miss Castleton, in its domestic bearing, was obvious:

"And your beautiful home is for sale?"

"Oh, yes, what is home without one's auntie?"

"And so it's really your choice? To sell?"

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"Y"—yes. Yes. Yes, it's really our choice. Had you heard to the contrary?"

"Why, Mr. Castleton, we had. Our New York cousin—isn't it odd how the lightest personal financial rumor will reach a financier?"

"Yes, and how accurately he will get it. But, frankly, ladies, whatever *truth* you've heard casts not a shadow of fault on auntie. Her rightness in the matter is beyond cavil. As for the judge and me, left alone as we are, we don't care to be tied up with a house to take care of. A hotel will suit us best."

For the first time in his acquaintanceship with the college women he saw them twinkle, while the elder asked: "Are you quite sure of the judge?"

He was saved from replying by the benevolent voice of a waiter who passed through announcing lunch—"now ready in the dining-car."

Late in the afternoon, when the three Creole grown-ups had talked out all their most urgent family matters and with due caution had discussed Philip, and when the young Mobile mother had had a call from Mrs. Holden and one from Philip, and had enjoyed their separate and sincere praises of her children's decorum—"when even Creole young folks' manners have become so sadly Americanized"—and the little girl had grown to be a silent, gazing worshipper of Rosalie, and the boy the same of Philip, the Northern and the Creole girl had an hour together, with only the smallest cousin seated opposite.

"Now!" thought mademoiselle. "Now we shall see!"

THE OTHER GIRL

Seeing was not difficult. Plainly the Northern girl was in love, pathetically so. She might hide the fact from *him*, but that was all; she could not from any girl looking for it. There was an underglow beneath every quietest thing she asked or said concerning him—a constant, manifest, unrewarded hunger for some sign of favor from him, that betrayed her mercilessly.

Jealousy waned. Most inconveniently the small devotee opposite, though all eyes, was equally all ears. So that when Rosalie wished to offer a special tenderness to the fair Northerner it had to be done entirely by a secret hand-grasp, in response to which the recipient, with a tear in her smile, murmured:

“You see right through me, don’t you?”

“Ah, but you don’t need to mind that.”

“I don’t so much, since it’s you. It’s a relief. You little know what a South Sea island that college is to us. If you did you’d see how you’ve counted, and still count, in my life, you and——”

“Yes?” asked Rosalie, “me and—the aforementioned?”

“Yes. The—the latter—had best not be mentioned again, even that way, just now. You know what little pitchers sometimes have—and use.”

“Ah, yes, I remember well the largeness of mine.”

“You see, mademoiselle, I’ve no person, place, or thing to help me put my heart out of my mind. As the poet says:

‘I have forgotten to forget.’

I’ve lost the knack—or never had it.”

LOVERS OF LOUISIANA

Rosalie was touched with both pity and gratitude. Without palmistry or card-reading, charm or incantation, through simple nature, nature of her own heart, jealousy had wrought benignly, and the clairvoyante's purpose was attained. In all Rosalie's own heart's part of the matter Philip was back again. But, ah, the poor girl whose hand she pressed, who seemed just what Philip's aunt, at least, might have chosen for him on the score of every inner and outer qualification! The thought brought a pang of self-effacement.

"For one thing," Rosalie softly prompted, "you can't remember to forget how perfectly you suit each other!"

"Oh, does it seem that way to you?"

"Yes, first time I saw you I said that to grand'mère. You are of the same politics, religion——"

"Same moral and social traditions!"

"Yes, everything the same."

"We rhyme!" whispered Emily. "We love the same poets, musicians, novelists, painters, everything!"

"I think a good friend might point him that out."

"Oh, sweet, he sees it."

"Yet in vain? Why is that?"

"For just the old, old, old reason."

"In love to another?"

"Yes, in love with you."

"M'm! He never told you he's renounced me?"

Smilingly the informant shook her head. "Not he. Yet I knew. I got it from Ovide Landry's wife without asking, and I know how much, and how little, renounce-

THE OTHER GIRL

ment means to him. Oh, Rosalie Durel, I implore you, before you're off this train, to make him renounce either that renouncement or else his love for you."

"Make him? How can a girl even mention a thing like that—and on a train? And anyhow with still some important things first to find out?"

"Oh, I wish you could—and would. Either step would set me free as neither I nor anything else, without it, can. Now do you see why I've made myself so transparent?"

"Transparent! But maybe like that sea around Bermuda, also deep."

"Deep, oh, no! Only, I hope, not too utterly shallow."

"You are what I last week heard somebody call you; you are very fair and very good."

"Who said that? Not——?"

"No, a woman. I am neither transparent nor either of those other fine things. But now—a question: This morning, when lunch was being called——"

"Yes? You heard us? About his aunt? Married?"

"Yes, but he's told me that already on the ship."

"Untimely blow to him."

"Blow? You truly think that?"

"Oh, I—I mean on the business side."

Rosalie started. "Busi'—I didn't hear of that."

"You never would from him. We heard it in New York. It appears that Miss Castleton had means of her own, in her father's custody, inherited from her

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mother. They were to come into her own hands only in the event of her marriage. You understand about such things, don't you?"

"Yes, I had once that same arrangement."

"Well, here, all at once, after her father'd been handling those means faultlessly for half a lifetime, and at a moment when he and her nephew had just put their own resources to a dangerous strain to extricate somebody from something——"

Rosalie put out a hand. "Who'? From what?"

"Why, that's the only point I'm not clear on. But anyhow, their home, in order to pay her in full and instant, is for sale."

Rosalie gasped. "Oh, no! Oh, no!" But then recovering, she musingly asked: "He thinks that will open the way out, or through?"

"Why, he makes so light of it you can't tell."

"Ah, that must never be! He shall never——"

A benign voice broke in: "Dinner is now ready in the dining-car."

LIII

TOO LATE

THE journey's second day drew near its end. Sunset lights and shades were on all the level land. Sunset colors filled the sky, bronzed the ruffling waters of the Mexican Gulf and its inlets, and flooded those wide green leagues of sea-marsh called the "Grand Plains," whose crossing takes up the express-train's last two hours of approach to the outskirts of New Orleans by way of Mobile.

All the day long Philip, under a serene exterior, had watched and yearned for a chance to sit again at Rosalie's side and take up their theme where the Mobile cousin and her sweet children, by this time at home, had so innocently broken it off. He had hoped for this opportunity the evening before, when the small pair had been early tucked into their berth; but their mother, it had turned out, "adored to play cards," and had with her all the equipment for *bézique*, *cribbage*, *euchre*, or auction bridge. So it had been, "auction" to a late hour, with only the Holdens left out. To-day hope had risen with the dawn, but so had the children; risen to shadow their two victims with an inexorable adoration, ill-timed in the eyes of every one

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but their mother, who could not imagine them more acceptably employed.

But now at last, with Mobile, Biloxi, and Pass Christian well behind and with monsieur explaining to the Holdens why Pass Christian is called Pass Christianne, a free Philip came near an emancipated Rosalie, who laid down the New Orleans afternoon paper and made room for him.

"But why looking so deep in thought?" she asked.

"Thinking of Mr. Murray," he said, "and especially of his parting words to us." The lover was for resuming the lost topic by the shortest cut.

Now, though Rosalie could not approve the short cut to vital topics on railway-trains, she was eager to know that "way through"; had even been urged by her father to find it out. Eager to know because she could allow no "way through" which would not be in part her own. A maiden's proper self-assertion required that, as also did her new knowledge of what Philip's *way in* had unexpectedly cost him. She had told this cost to her father, who, like her, had said, "My faith, no! They shall not do that!"

So now she replied to Philip: "Mr. Murray? That's droll; I, too, was thinking of him. Those newspapers are still talking about those strange warnings to people not to sail on the *Lusitania*. What do you think about those warnings?"

"Oh, those? I give them no more weight than I would an old nurse's superstitions."

"Ah, I wouldn't give them nearly so much!"

TOO LATE

That point Philip left uncontested. Picking up "The Way Out" he inquired: "What of this? Have you hacked your way through it?"

"Ah, to hack through, I don't believe in that. Anyhow, for me, that's a great book. I believe I can't ever again look at any part of the world, however large, however small—Europe, United States, Dixie, Louisiana, Bermuda, New Orleans—the same way I used to look. And I think 'tis the same way with papa, only, papa, he's, eh, too like a man to say so."

Philip smiled. "Men rarely own up spiritual debts," he admitted, and, turning some leaves, added: "What golden luck it is for one to light on the right book at the right moment in one's life; not too soon, not too late."

"You think that's our case now, papa and me?"

"I don't know. It's been mine once or twice. It might be so again if I should read this."

There Rosalie was amused. "You, no! You don't require! But about this book and me—and maybe also papa—you are right. It has found us precisely at the right preparedness. I suppose Mr. Murray thought that when he gave it us. Anyhow 'tis to me a reason of the strength of that book that 'tis presented us by him, he knowing us—knowing you—knowing everything—since a year. But also another reason 'tis that I'm perusing it coming home through Dixie."

"Then you're feeling Dixie again as I feel it!"

"Ah, I know not. Tell me how you are feeling that." The girl settled back, designing to pilot her

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companion just far enough from "The Way Through" not to be too near for maiden serenity nor yet too far for definite results.

Said Philip: "Why may I not try to speak for both of us at once?" And when she archly nodded he continued: "Well, we realize that what we've seen both is and is not the same old Dixie; same dear hills, woods, fields, same human millions pale and dark——"

She broke in:

"There is no land like Dixie
In all the wide world over."

"True," said Philip. "For better, for worse, she's the last of her kind, and most abidingly herself! But, speaking of Mr. Murray——"

"I think every country ought to be herself!"

"Well, Dixie'll always be Dixie. We needn't fear—as thousands do, you know—that changes for the better will ever make her less herself or less fair or dear. But, speaking, I say, of Mr. Murray——"

"But our city; she also will appear changed after those few weeks?"

"Mademoiselle, has a week never counted to you for a year?" A pause. "I know it has." Another pause. "You know it has to me."

The answer was wary. "Yes, in New York, for example, I had that experience. Between a day of eyes shut and eyes open there can seem years. And now to me I'm sure our city's going to look both the same

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and different, because my own eyes are the same and not the same."

"Why not say our eyes," ventured Philip; but she was suddenly deaf.

"You know," she resumed, "I think we shall feel as if 'tis the city herself that's been away?"

"And as if she'd come back with a new stature and larger spirit, more than ever worth loving and striving for?"

"Or striving against?" Rosalie asked with an arraigning twinkle.

"Oh, either. What I hope we'll both see——"

"With our new sight!"

"Yes, and more clearly in the intenser life of the city than out here, though it's out here, too——"

"I know! Say that! I want to hear that!"

"Why, I hope we shall see a growing, practical recognition, by our people as a people——"

"Creoles and all?"

"Creoles and all—a recognition that, as with every people, some of our dearest singularities are obsolete weapons under obsolete cloaks, good only to get rid of, and the sooner the better."

"Sooner? Better? For who'? For what?"

"For welfare; for honor; the world's and our own. Now, can't we hope that together, we two?"

"Ah, well—I—I suppose maybe so. Together and with many others, even with papa, since Bermuda—and that great war—teaching us so many things."

"Especially the hidden danger of obsolete weapons,"

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said Philip. "But, mademoiselle, this isn't what I came to talk to you about."

"Only 'tis so much the most on your heart, eh?"

"No, only that it's forever in my way."

"Your way through, perchance?"

Philip eagerly repeated the phrase.

"But, Mr. Castleton."

"Mademoiselle."

"We are already past Lake Catherine; I think there is now no time. You ought to have commenced about that before."

"I can be as brief as a telegram and as guarded."

"Ah, guarded? I cannot suppose there is need to be guarded. That's a financial question; I am sure you will express that financially."

"Fitly, I hope. You speak of new sight. Of late, while left so entirely alone with the judge, I've had new sight for a thing, a most beautiful and sacred thing, which I might have seen months earlier had not my own passion so blinded me in all directions but one." The hurried words stopped. Rosalie's hands had visibly tightened on her book.

"Yes," she said. Her averted eyes narrowed, her subdued voice slightly hardened. "Yes, I think so. And this time I think I'm guessing more correctly what that is and who 'tis about."

"You must be. You can't miss it this time."

"No, I've seen that same thing. Also I see that's for you especially a most excellent way out."

"Not out, mademoiselle; you mean through."

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She shook her head. The narrowed eyes still looked away and the low voice remained a trifle hard. "No. Out, after all, is the best way and I beg you to take it. I saw how good that is just those last two days whilst you were sitting there with her."

"With—oh, mademoiselle——"

"Wait, let me tell you. That's because I perceive how beautifully, perfectly, you and she, as they say, rhyme! Same politics, religion, philosophy, loving the same poets, painters, musicians, everything——"

"Ah, how can you? How can you make *that* mistake?"

The averted eyes came back. "That's a mistake? I have guessed wrong again?"

"On ship or land, never so wrong before."

"That's absolute? You assure me that?"

"Absolutely. No such thing ever entered my mind. For me there's never been, there never can be, but one of your kind. Don't you know that? You do. You do."

"Then what"—a catch of agitation broke the question in two—"what do you see with that new sight?"

"A mind, a heart, which you also must have seen. The lifetime patient mind, the lifetime loyal heart, of my dear young-old judge! Of him and——"

The inquirer's hand lifted. "If you please, no! The judge alone you can say, if you want; but the judge *and*—no! *And* is not possible to suppose. But anyhow, in that mind of the judge what did you see?"

"Something very much like my way through. I

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saw that years are not the true measure of youth. I saw that under the surface of life a buried love can lie years in trance, with that life aspiring, blooming, and fruiting in all its duties round and round the circle of the seasons and at last, sooner or later, come to its own, its resurrection and reward."

"But, Mr. Castleton—like papa——"

"Yes, true, like your father, the judge married."

"Well, you, you can't regret *that*."

"No. And yet, mademoiselle, had he not married, *this* might have come to him far earlier."

"What is *this*?" There was challenge in the query.

"His chance. I call it nothing more. His whole heart's chance, now his last chance. It might have come in ten years or less. Mine may come in five."

"I—I don't—I don't understand."

"I'll explain. As I see myself, I lie supine in the bondage of a single silken thread; a thread of absurd punctilio, too fine-spun for ordinary sight. That's plain so far, is it not?"

"Yes, but—not so brief as a telegram."

"Well, so lying, and asking no conditional pledge of anybody, I claim for myself one right, the right to wait; and for the judge one, the right to be paid at last for all his waiting."

"I think you are not speaking very financially."

"I will. Your father's obligation to the judge and me will some day be extinguished; not by Mr. Murray; on that subject I fancy we have his last word; but by

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your father himself. Till then I want you to let me wait—as the judge has waited.”

The girl shook her head. “My papa tells me that may take ten, fifteen, twenty years. And that’s a bondage not of a silken thread.”

“No, nor of so much as a cobweb, save by your own choice. But whatever it is, or the length of time may be, or you may do meantime, I’ll wait. Who can tell? Fortune, smiling on so many in these days of fabulous gains and losses, may smile on your father, and my time turn out joyfully short. But, short or long, I’ll wait. And that, mademoiselle, tame as it looks, tame enough for the tamest mind, is my way through.”

The listener sighed. “Seems to me that’s pretty wild. Mr. Castleton, your home, ’tis for sale?”

The two sat eye to eye while Philip asked: “Does that count against me?—with you?”

“No,” she replied, rising as the porter came with his brushes, “on the contrary. And neither with papa. Go there now and ask him; he’ll tell you that.” Her dismissing smile was as sweet as a rose.

“But—oh!—but——”

“Yes, I know. And I’m sorry. But if you couldn’t be brief as a telegram you ought to have commenced about that before.”

LIV

THE *LUSITANIA*! THE *LUSITANIA*!

WELL lost to the careless eye in that wide piece of up-town New Orleans once called Jefferson City stands an old Creole home which even at this last moment claims first place in our attention.

On which side of St. Charles or Peters Avenue it may be found, or how many squares from either, matters not. It stands, or sits—nests on the ground in the cool of its blossoming evergreens—at the far end of a well-shaded old flower-garden.

This garden was once of much extent, but some shortage of worldly wisdom compelled its heirs to part with four-fifths of it to a buyer who, while planning to build on it, developed an incurable ailment, changed his whim, and gave—left—the ground to the city for a bit of park.

As such, owing to the city's lack of interest in it, it remained beautiful; but, possibly for that reason, had never become very public. A few nurses and children found pleasure in it by day, but after every clear sunset it once more belonged to the moon and stars, the mocking-bird and the up-town Ducatels. For Ducatels they were—a father, mother, son, and son's wife and children, who dwelt there, in the reserved remnant behind.

THE LUSITANIA! THE LUSITANIA!

Such were the facts in May, 1915, when their beautiful and beloved cousin, Madame Durel, was their guest—and the garden's and park's guest—while Rosalie and her father were in New York and Bermuda, and while the son, the ex-bank-teller, was beginning life a second time in the new antique shop in Royal Street. But now monsieur and Rosalie were back, and with 'mère and the four cousins had set up a Durel-Ducatel household.

"Permanent?" their Creole intimates inquired.

"Ah, that depended! Anyhow, permanent for the time being; until they could find something much more roomy, elegant, modern, central, and inexpensive.

So said madame gravely, Rosalie gayly, in the house itself—or garden—at an afternoon reception proposed for them by certain kindred in advance of their arrival and given to and by them on the second day after it. The Castletons, of course, attended, to whom "Alphonse" was so cordial that some of those kindred grunted, some sniffed. A mere outdoor tea the affair was, but cottage and garden were alike so thronged that the judge and Philip, especially Philip, could be courteously slighted without any of the household (save Rosalie) being aware. Two or three tried the amusing feat.

"And now *their* house is for sale," gossiped certain ones bound homeward. "Why is that? Cotton?"

A shrug. "No, indorsing."

"Who' for? That Scotchman, may we hope?"

"No one knows. Some say Ovide Landry."

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"Oh, impossible! And Rosalie, finds no—choir?"

"No need! Bank's doing so well!"

"Aha, Jean, there is magic in the Durel name yet!"

"Yes, the best kind, Marie; money magic."

"Ah, sordid! Well, here's my car-line. Good-by. Oh, are you going at Tulane Friday afternoon to hear that Belgian professor tell about the war? Rosalie and 'mère are going. They are of the Era Club now, you know. You'll be there, tired business man?"

"No, I don't digest lectures. For me the best diet, that's the movies. And besides, Friday?"

"So says Professor Castleton, who will introduce him."

"And yet you are going!"

"Yes, I'm not hideboun', like you—ha-ha!"

The low-roofed cottage behind the bit of park contributed to the lecturer's audience not only grand'mère and Rosalie, but the elder pair of Ducatels. At the hour's close these four, leaving the hall, were overtaken by Philip. "Are you walking home?" he asked them, and to Rosalie added: "I'd like to walk with you."

Following madame and the Ducatels the two were led into a series of umbrageous streets between residential gardens. "This," Philip said, with a motive, "is almost as private as your little park or your own cottage."

"Ah, not at all. Are you looking for somebody?"

He glanced three ways. "I'm looking for a news-boy."

THE *LUSITANIA*! THE *LUSITANIA*!

"In St. Charles Avenue I saw two or three."

"Yes, at a distance, and our audience buying their papers excitedly. Do you know? The more the papers print, the more I'm bothered about Mr. Murray and his ship. I'm selfishly bothered. I want your seal on my "way through" while it's costing me all it can. I want it before it can in any sort be cheapened by any news of his safe arrival."

The response came tardily. "Mr. Castleton?"

"Well?"

"One thing I never saw in my life. Did you ever see that?" The inquirer's smile was so sweet, so nearly fond, that the lover's heart thrilled.

"Ever see what?"

"Did you ever see, however quiet the place, the seal—put on anything—in the street?"

"Oh! I'll say no more till we get to your house."

"And till 'mère has asked you to come in?"

"Yes, and to sit down," he jested. "But," he added, sobering, "I've something else, which I must say before we hear any *bad* news of our friend."

"Something else you must say? About—what?"

"Zéphire Durel. He and his fellow traveller are on that steamer. I got them on it. I thought their haste to be gone was wise and also that in any strait Mr. Murray might be some help to them."

"Ah, yes! You were good to do that. Oh, that news you are fearing—I think that's impossible! But next corner is Peters Avenue and maybe the newsboy."

Indeed, as they reached that point, and their seniors

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paused for them on the corner over the way, a car passed and a newsboy stepped from it, crying the awful tidings of the *Lusitania*. Philip bought a paper.

"More than a thousand lost!" he sighed. His gaze swept down the page and suddenly, mutely, he passed the sheet to Rosalie, and in a roll of the lost she read the name of their friend. With flooded eyes bent on it, she turned away. Madame and the Ducatels rejoined her. Tearfully smiling, she looked again to Philip.

"Good evening," she said. "Come see us—later."

"To-day? To-morrow?"

"No. I—I'll write you that. Good-by."

LV

LISTEN!

TO-MORROW, not a line from her. To-morrow again, never a word. Again to-morrow, nothing! So to the lover ticked eternity's clock.

But he masqueraded well. Day brought the day's work, night the library-lamp and newspaper recitals of the ocean massacre; tales of horror, tales of glorious self-sacrifice; amended lists of the rescued and of the lost. Zéphire and Philomèle were gone. He had sunk after saving her and she had died in one of the lifeboats. The second morning had brought a rumor that the banker, Murray, after all, was not lost. In the afternoon——

"Rose," said grand'mère, "telephone."

Rosalie accepted the receiver, but held madame captive. "Yes, this is— Ah, good evening. News? No, what is it? We were just going out in hopes to buy a paper."

"That rumor," said the instrument, "is confirmed, absolutely verified. Mr. Murray is saved."

"Ah, heaven be thanked! What else? Is there more?"

"Very little. Trying to save your cousin, he did sink. But he rose and was saved. That's all we know so far."

"But that's glorious! And what other news?"

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"None. Have you written that, eh——?"

"Ah, that's too soon yet. I must get some other news before that. . . . Yes, pretty soon. . . . Good-by." The receiver clicked on the hook, and the girl turned as madame asked, in French——

"Other news? What other news must you get?"

Rosalie dropped her hands on madame's shoulders. "News from you! Right now!"

In madame's room they sat down, four hands joined, but at Rosalie's first utterance she was stopped. "Oh, my child, my poor child! Impossible! How could you suppose it? . . . No, under no possible circumstance. . . . No, not even to make you happy. It could never make you happy to see me so pathetically ridiculous. Enough! Enough! As you love me, do not mention that ever, ever, ever again. Ah, spare your tears; your day of joy may yet come."

"Beloved, the tears are for you and you alone!"

On the tenth day afterward there was yet no line, never a word, nothing. But on the eleventh afternoon there came into Prytania Street by the hand of a small Ducatel a note inviting both Castletons to call that evening, yet preparing them for one disappointment; in the first half of the evening M. Durel would not be at home but down in the Vieux Carré on business.

When they reached the cottage garden they were confronted by that always charming sight, a Creole family emerging from their front door. Besides the two Durel ladies were the senior Ducatel, his wife, their son's wife, and that pretty cousin whom the Castletons had

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first met at the opera-house concert. She was just returning to her own home, a few squares off, and Rosalie and the elderly Ducatel were about to conduct her. But now he yielded his place to Philip and with his wife and daughter-in-law passed into the cottage while the judge and grand'mère joined the other three.

The garden, the sequestered little park beyond it, the summer air, the fragrance, the shade of the streets' camphor-trees, the palms against the moonlight, made an enchanting hour and scene. But the home-bound cousin was feeling derelict. A babe was awaiting her, and her step, frankly encouraged by Rosalie and Philip, grew eager. On the other hand, grand'mère, if only in deference to the judge and the temperature, preferred a more dignified progress and warned the three juniors that if he and she were to be thus dropped they would mercilessly turn back. And soon they mercilessly did so.

"I wouldn' have object' to go faster if they had request' us," she said as, once more nearing the park, they went yet slower.

But equally slow in their returning step were the other pair, and as soft in their speech, mainly Rosalie's. Almost in their first moment alone she had asked Philip if, still with no pledge from her, he held immovably to his proposal to wait and wait through the years. And when he said, "Immovably !" he felt her tremble as she let herself be old-fashioned enough to take his arm.

"Surely," he added, "you've not sent for me to tell me you forbid?"

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She replied that she was still in doubt if it was not purely selfish and cruel for her to allow it.

"But you do allow it? Tell me you do!"

"Mr. Castleton, if everything was the same this evening as when we walked last together I wouldn't, I couldn't permit."

"But everything is not the same? What's come to pass?"

"I must tell you. This morning all at once has come to pass something to make it possible, even probable, that such a waiting as you propose, though it might be for years, might be for just only a few." There the girl felt the lover tremble, and hurriedly spoke on: "But this doesn't mean that even at the last I can say what you'll be waiting for. Only if that fact is recognized——"

"I fully recognize it."

"Only if that is recognized can I tell you what a strange letter I got this morning."

"From Murray?"

"Yes."

"About our——?"

"No, only about Zéphire. Zéphire, since beginning the *Lusitania* voyage, was all the time trying to be with Mr. Murray, and because, you know, he was born to talk about himself, he told many things. And among the rest he told how, whilst that short time in Mexico, he and Philomèle had kept, with a splendid success, a gambling-house. Well! On the third day of the steamer he astonished Mr. Murray when he

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showed him a bill of exchange for thousands of pounds sterling, and begged Mr. Murray to let him endorse that to him and leave it in his hand."

Philip made a fist: "I know why! I suspected it on the Bermuda steamer. He thought one of those refugees was following him with deadly intent."

It was so. This man, Rosalie resumed, had lost a fortune at Zéphire's tables, and on ship after ship was still-hunting him and that bill of exchange. Now the banker was besought to hold it subject to the ex-cashier's call. In the event of Zéphire's death with the deposit unclaimed, or in any strong presumption of his death, it was to be paid unconditionally to Rosalie.

"And papa has it now in the bank. He will pay you that whole amount to-morrow."

"What! Me? No! Never! A thousand times, no! Your poor cousin never meant *that*. If your release from debt ever crossed his mind he thought only—for he knew only—of Ovide."

"No, I think he knew better. He was too smart for that—Zéphire Durel. Anyhow you'll make me very unhappy if you refuse that from papa to-morrow."

So for a time they contended, but in the end Philip drew the girl's hand to his lips, murmuring: "Mademoiselle, we are out! No, not out; we are through!"

"Ah-h! When just now you fully recognized——"

"I did. I do. But the wait, Rosalie, the long, long wait, is cancelled."

She was inexorable. "Not by that. That can maybe make it more short, but how much you don't

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know. Because, you see? To release not me alone but also 'mère and papa, we have there not enough, neither half enough; and for me is no release possible except it be also of 'mère and papa. But, Mr. Castleton, there is besides another trouble."

"Oh, not—oh, surely not another?"

"Yes. That's not financial, yet still at the same time 'tis the worst of all."

"Ah, me! Tell it. Tell it!"

"I don't know if you can believe that's the worst, and same time it is! You remember"—the words caught in her throat, stopped by a loser's desperation playing a poor hand's poorest card—"you remember, last week I telephoned you I must first get some other news? Well, that same day I got it. 'Twas from grand'mère. I thought it is going to be good, but it turned out very, very, very bad. And so long as 'tis *that way* I can't ever give that answer you want. And that's notwithstanding you are, to me, of very, very few faults."

Chagrin drove the lover to irony. "Except in my politics," he suggested.

Ah, your politics, I have learned to stand them. Because, Mr. Castleton, I see that in all your politics, right or wrong, you are a—a lover—of truth—of justice—and of Louisiana, and for me that's enough."

"Then what is this last, worst trouble of all? Your praises only make me desperate if you can't tell me that."

"Ah, that's impossible! All I can say is, just, yes,

LISTEN!

you can wait. I can't prevent you from waiting, can I?"

"No, you can't prevent me."

"And you *shall* wait? Spite of all? Even of me?"

"I shall wait in spite of all, even of you."

He felt her tremble again. "Mr. Castleton," she asked, "I didn't tell you papa also he's got one?"

"What! A letter? And from the same source?"

"He'll inform you. He'll presently be back."

"Mademoiselle, has he gone to see Ovide?"

"I'll—I'll tell you. But"—they were re-entering the park, and her tone dropped to a murmur—"there is here, these nights, a mocking-bird—of course there are, all the time, everywhere, thousands of mocking-birds, but—I never heard one so astonishing. Maybe if we are quiet he'll commence to sing."

The moon was high. The tall shrubberies and their shadows on the paths were velvet-black. A certain bench beside a mass of roses, close by, though not yet in view, drew their steps. Motioning Philip back, Rosalie stole forward to overpeer this growth and that, till presently the seat came into her view—pre-empted. Beside it stood madame and the judge. What startling significance was in their attitude need not be detailed. Rosalie saw it with all the rapture that had ever overflowed the spot in the bird's song. She stole back to Philip showing such emotion that he met her anxiously. Tears shone in her eyes, yet she spoke first. "Papa is not come?"

"No, what's happened? What have you seen?"

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"Something," she smilingly replied, "that ought to have been seen forty years ago." She plucked his sleeve and they moved on, taking pains to be heard, and the next word was from madame to Rosalie.

"Ah! And now, on the contrary, you have compel' us to wait! . . . Ah, yes! But would you have like' for us to go into the house without you? Oh-h, no!"

"Listen!" said Rosalie. "Papa is coming."

Monsieur appeared. "I'm sorry," he said, "not to be sooner at home. I was oblige' to go down-town."

"To see Ovide," boldly prompted Rosalie.

"Ah, you've tol' on me! Well, then, gentlemen, I'll ask you a favor."

Both Castletons granted it first and heard it afterward.

"'Tis this," said monsieur. "When you arr-ive home to-night will you please to juz', eh, take that uzeless sign off yo' house?"

"Mr. Durel," asked Philip, "did Mr. Murray impose—conditions?"

"My dear sir," said the smiling Creole, "let me tell you; tha'z a thing deztined to remain egsclusively between him and me." He addressed the judge. "Well, shall we all pazz inside?"

They and madame began to go and the juniors followed. But at a slight angle in the shrubbery Rosalie felt a detaining touch and she and Philip stood still, alone.

"Are we not to hear the bird?" he murmured.

LISTEN !

"Ah! Can I cause a bird to sing by just telling him?"

"Yes. You can. Yes. Rosalie, the first time we ever met, in that far Northern city, when everything that had power to sunder us began to rise into sight, I too heard a bird sing amazingly. Say one word and he will sing again."

Despite a certain bewitching resistance he had begun to draw her to himself, but "Nn-o," she said, "I don't think that's possible. Ah, that would be a sin! That would be magic!"

"Magic or not, Rosalie, it's happening now. Listen! Don't you hear it?"

She looked up into his eyes. She had never been so near them. And she listened. "Nn-o, I—I don't hear it."

A hand on her head pressed it to his heart. "Do you hear it now?" he asked. "Do you hear it—now?" And she whispered:

"Yes."

THE END

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